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TREATISE ON PRAYER

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A BRIEF TREATISE

ON

PRAYER;

DEDICATED TO THE

Christian Churches in America.

By R. MILLIGAN.

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PREFACE.

THE following articles on Prayer were written for the *Millenial Harbinger*. At the time of writing them, it was not my purpose to offer them to the public in any other form than as monthly contributions to the pages of that invaluable periodical. But, since their publication, I have received letters from many of my most highly-esteemed and thoughtful brethren, urging me to publish them in the form of a tract, for more extensive and general distribution. Brother D. S. BURNET says: "Print them by all means." And Brother A. CAMPBELL says, in a recent communication, "I have just carefully *re-read* your seven articles on Prayer, and I can conscientiously and most cordially commend them to all our brethren and the reading and inquisitive public, who are desirous of knowing their duty and privilege in the use and enjoyment of prayer, personal and

social. The right of petition to the throne of the universe, in the name and through the mediation and intercession of our glorified High Priest, is, indeed, not merely one of the privileges of every citizen of Christ's kingdom, but it is also the paramount honor and privilege of every human being that believes in the Divine person, office, and dignity of Emanuel, our Lord Jesus the Christ, through whom alone a sinner can, with any confidence, expect an answer to his petitions."

To the judgment of such brethren I have finally yielded. And I now offer to the public this short treatise on prayer, fervently praying that God may make it a means of awakening, and cherishing, and promoting in the hearts of many more of the spirit of prayer and supplication.

R. MILLIGAN.

KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY, April 6, 1863.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

SINCE the sale of the first edition of this little tract, in the summer of 1863, the calls for a second have been very frequent. And I have, therefore, consented to have it republished, hoping that, with the blessing of God, it may still serve to promote the important object for which it was written.

R. MILLIGAN.

KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY, Feb. 12, 1867.

PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

NATURE AND PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER.

PRAYER is the spontaneous utterance of every grateful and pious heart. It flows from a sense of our dependence on God for blessings internal as well as for favors external. Any man who looks into the deep recesses of his own nature, will see and feel that there are there wants which he has no power to supply. He may not fully comprehend what these wants are, whence they are, and what will satisfy them. But this very uncertainty, if he knows the Father and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, will only prompt him to exclaim, with a more profound and realizing sense of his own dependence, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according

to thy loving kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."*

This feeling of dependence is very greatly strengthened by a survey of our relations to the universe. Not only our happiness, but our very existence, is suspended on a thousand objective realities over which we have no control. Without the heat, and light, and other genial influences of the sun, we would all very soon perish. But what mortal can guide the chariot of the king of Day? What sage or potentate can hasten the rising splendors of his coming, or stay for a moment the waning glories of his departure? Job once exulted in his own greatness and wisdom; but when interrogated on the laws, the operations, the ordinances, and the dependencies of nature, he was dumb. When asked, "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season,

* Psa. li: 10, 11.

or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto him, Here we are?" In reply to all such questions, he could only say, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no farther." *

The study of nature, therefore, as well as the study of Divine Revelation, causes us to feel our dependence on something beyond ourselves for life and happiness. And hence it is just as natural to pray as it is to sigh, or as it is to moan. The very atheist is often heard to utter exclamations which indicate the wants of his soul, the weakness of his nature, his longing after something which he has never been able to realize, and his dependence on that God whom he has proudly, practically, and theoretically discarded.

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* Job xl: 4, 5.

But to whom shall we pray? for what shall we pray? and how shall we pray? These are questions of paramount interest to every humble penitent who feels his need of help from some superior power; but they are questions to which the book of nature gives no satisfactory answer. "The world by wisdom knew not God," * said the greatest of all the apostles. And a greater than he has said, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." †

To look up through nature to nature's God; to prove that the visible creation is but an index of the infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness of Jehovah; that it is, in fact, but the medium through which God pours out on all mankind the oceans of his love and the rich streams of his benevolence, seems to have been a problem entirely too profound for the unassisted powers of Man's erring reason. The proximate causes of life and happiness were more easily seen and comprehended. The sun diffused its light and heat upon the world; and therefore it was dei-

* 1 Cor. i: 21. † Matt. xi: 27.

fied. The Nile poured its flood of annual blessings upon Egypt; and hence, too, it became an object of worship. This principle of deification was extended until, in some countries, the gods became almost as numerous as the objects of nature. At one time the Greeks worshiped thirty thousand legalized divinities; and the Hindoos adored three hundred and thirty-three millions.

It is true that the idea of Jehovah's existence, first communicated to Adam in Paradise, and afterward transmitted by tradition to his posterity, was never wholly forgotten. The ancient philosophers often spoke familiarly of the Supreme God. But they did not generally regard him as a proper object of worship. They supposed that he was too far above them to feel any concern for their welfare.

How strongly does this contrast with the doctrine of Divine Revelation! In the Bible, we are assured that God sits upon a throne of mercy; and that he has opened up a new and living way, through which all men may come to him, and find grace to help in every time of need. Nay, more; we there learn not only that this is our privilege, but that Jehovah, the

Almighty Maker, Preserver, and Upholder of this vast universe, condescends even to entreat us to come to him; and in the name of his own dear Son, whom he has set forth as a propitiation for our sins, to ask any thing and every thing that can, in any way, contribute to our real enjoyment, with the assurance that whatever we ask in faith will be certainly granted. "Ask," says he, "and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. For what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him."* "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."† "If," says John, "we

* Matt. vii: 7–11. † Isa. i: 18.

confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Is it not strange, then — passing strange — that all men do not pray? that they do not pray always? that they do not pray without ceasing? that they do not in every thing give thanks, knowing that this is good and acceptable unto God? If an audience, even infinitely less gracious than this, were offered to the whole world by the Autocrat of all the Russias, how soon would the Court of St. Petersburg be thronged with humble suppliants from the remotest parts of the earth! Why, then, do not all men press to the mercy-seat of the King of kings and the Lord of lords? Why do they not participate in an honor than which there is none greater enjoyed even by Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God? Surely there is nothing more reasonable than that fallen, sinful, perishing mortals should worship, serve, and adore their Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer.

But it may be asked, what is the use of prayer? All must admit that it is a most

* 1 John i. 9.

reasonable service; but, in this utilitarian age, it is also a matter of first importance to illustrate its great practical value. And to do this properly, we must consider the different kinds of prayer; or, at least, the prayer of the closet, of the family, and of the public congregation. Each of these has its peculiar advantages, as we will endeavor to show. But for the present we will only add, in the words of the pious Montgomery,

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death,
He enters heaven by prayer.
Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways,
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And say, Behold, he prays!
The saints in prayer appear as one,
In word, in deed, in mind,
When with the Father and the Son,
Their fellowship they find.
Nor prayer is made on earth alone,
The Holy Spirit pleads,
And Jesus on the eternal throne
For sinners intercedes.
O thou, by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer thyself hast trod,
LORD, TEACH US HOW TO PRAY!"

CHAPTER II.

ADVANTAGES AND UTILITY OF SECRET PRAYER.

MY present theme is the utility of secret prayer. I will not attempt to exhaust the subject: I will only briefly notice and illustrate some of the most obvious benefits which result from this part of Christian devotion.

1. The first of these is the cultivation of our own spiritual nature. If it is a law of the human constitution that all its powers and susceptibilities are developed and strengthened by exercise, then what can be more beneficial than the devotions of the closet? There is no other place beneath the heavens that is so favorable for the legitimate exercise of our moral faculties. Even in the religious assembly, the attention is often arrested and the heart made to wander by some improper display of the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. But from the closet all such evil influences are excluded. There is no motive to deceive, or to make a vain

display of our persons, our dress, and our good works. But there the mind turns in upon itself. There the conscience is awakened; there we see ourselves in the light of heaven. And there, under the deep, solemn conviction that we are on holy ground, and that the eye of God is upon us, we are almost compelled to be humble, to repent of our sins, to forgive our enemies, to sympathize with the afflicted, to adore our Creator, to love our Redeemer, and to exercise all the powers of our souls in harmony with the will of God.

An hour in the closet may, therefore, do more to rectify and strengthen our religious impressions and moral faculties than many days of ordinary service in the public congregation. And hence our Savior says to every disciple, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly." *

2. It forms a habit of close union, communion, and fellowship with God. The law of habit is well understood. All men live and act

* Matt. vi: 6.

under its influence. The man who frequents the theater, the ball-room, the drinking or the gambling saloon, soon feels that he is, by an invisible and almost irresistible influence, drawn to these haunts of idleness, vice, and dissipation. He may see poverty, disgrace, misery, and wretchedness before him, and he may feel the awful forebodings of an awakened conscience within him, but the force of habit overcomes all his fears and feeble resolutions. Under its still increasing power, he visits and revisits these charnel-houses of iniquity, till a dart strikes through his liver, and, by his own folly, he seals forever the doom of his eternal infamy.

But the man who begins his course of life on the ascending scale, who forms habits of industry, frugality, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and philanthropy will soon find no difficulty in ascending to the mount of God. These habits become to him the secondary laws of his nature, and he hungers and thirsts after righteousness as the weary hart pants after the brooks of water.

The habit of secret prayer is no exception to this general law. In no other religious exercise are we brought so near to God; in no other

can we be so familiar with the Creator of our bodies and the Father and Preserver of our spirits. And, as it is a law of our nature that we form attachments to those with whom we associate, and even become assimilated to them in the elements of our character, it follows that no other acts of devotion are so favorable for the cultivation of godliness, and for the formation of those other virtues the tendency of which is to draw us nearer and nearer to God, as the only immutable, eternal, and unwasting fountain of life and happiness. And hence those who have been most devoted to the closet, and who, in this way, have formed habits of intimacy, communion, and fellowship with God, have always been the happiest of men.

This is no merely theoretical or speculative conclusion. It is sustained by the history of all past ages. The prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs were all remarkable examples of the truth of this hypothesis; and so are the spirits of the just in heaven, who cease not day nor night to "worship Him that liveth forever and ever, and to cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power: for thou

hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*

3. It preserves us from many evils. Our worst enemies are our own lusts and passions. But these may all be subdued by and through the influence of secret prayer. How, for example, can any man cherish a feeling of pride in his heart when, concealed from the world, he pours out the desires of his soul in humble supplication to the God who rules in heaven, and who does what he pleases with the inhabitants of the earth! How can he cultivate a spirit of revenge while imploring forgiveness from that Being who has said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord!" How can he indulge in anger, wrath, malice, or any of the other works of the flesh, while seeking the aid of that Spirit whose fruits are always "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, and temperance!" Prayer, when properly offered, must always have a soothing influence on the affections. Its tendency is to allay the passions, to promote the virtues, and to harmonize all the powers and

* Rev. iv: 10, 11.

faculties of the soul. It subdues the will of man, and makes the will of God the supreme law of the universe.

4. It also secures to us much positive good, by fulfilling a condition on which God can and does bestow his blessings on fallen man. It is a great mistake to suppose that the influence of prayer is altogether subjective or reflective; or, at any rate, that it never extends beyond the narrow limits of our own earthly associations. It reaches God himself; it moves the very soul of the universe.

I know some have ridiculed the idea that the prayers and entreaties of fallen, sinful worms of the dust should in any way affect the Divine administration. But this is only to expose their own ignorance of the moral government of God. If a father finds it consistent with his dignity, with the regulations of his government, and with the best interests of his children, to bestow favors in answer to their petitions, why may not the Almighty Father of the universe act on the same principle? If this is a wise and prudent regulation in the government of a family, why may it not be so in the economy and administration of the universe? Surely this is not a

proper subject for ridicule. If we can not understand it, let us humbly confess our ignorance and seek for more enlarged and comprehensive views of the Divine government. To many persons it would appear just as absurd that the pen in my hand should have an influence on the most remote of the fixed stars, as that the prayers of a poor, penniless, and despised follower of Jesus Christ should excite the sympathies of Heaven, and affect the purposes of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. But these two problems have both been solved. Newton obtained an answer to the one, and the Holy Spirit has demonstrated the other. The question, then, is forever settled with those who regard the Bible as of paramount authority.

The following illustrations from the Holy Oracles may serve to stir up the minds of many by way of remembrance on this important subject. We quote first from Moses: "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be before they believe me for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with a pestilence, and disinherit them, and I will

make of thee a greater nation and a mightier than they. And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, for thou broughtest up this people from among them, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land, for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt

even until now. *And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word."* *

The testimony of the Apostle James on this subject is also altogether conclusive. "Confess your faults," says he, "one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth for the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." †

My space will not permit me to make any additional quotations; but, as an antidote to the skepticism that now exists on this subject, I commend to my readers, and especially to the young, the study and careful examination of such passages as Gen. xix: 17–21; Num. xi: 1–2; Deut. ix: 12–20; 1 Sam. xii: 16–19; 2 Kings xx: 1–6; Job xlii: 7, 8; Psa. xviii: 6–15; Daniel ii: 18, 19; Jonah iii: 1–10; Luke xviii: 1–8; 1 John iii: 22; all of which

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* Numbers xiv: 11–20. † James v: 16–18.

illustrate the great efficacy of prayer, and its influence even on the will and purposes of Jehovah. As long, then, as it is written, "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," it will be in vain to speculate and philosophize against the utility and propriety of secret prayer. The rational and well-grounded conviction that, by a solemn appeal to our Heavenly Father, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we may obtain the free and full pardon of all our sins, gives more peace, joy, comfort, and consolation to the soul than all the honors and wealth of this time-perishing world can bestow.

5. It enables us to promote the good and happiness of others. This it does in several ways. In the first place, it is, as we have seen, the means of securing the favor of God in their behalf. The prayers of Abraham were worth more to Lot than all the riches of the plain; the entreaties of Job were full of blessings to Eliphaz, and Bildad, and Zophar; and the intercession of Moses saved the nation of Israel.

Who, then, can estimate the amount of good that has been secured to mankind through the humble, earnest, and penitential supplications of the closet? Who can recount the various individual, social, ecclesiastical, and national blessings that have been poured out of the windows of heaven in answer to secret prayer? Who can tell how many poor wandering prodigals have been brought back to their Father's house, and made heirs to immortality and eternal life, through the earnest and repeated prayers of a pious brother, or sister, or mother?

Why, then, do we not all thus pray? Why do we not more frequently retire to our closets, and pray more earnestly for the salvation of immortal souls? How much more parents might do in this way to promote the present and eternal well-being of their children than they can by constantly laboring to secure for them a large supply of the riches, and the honors, and the pleasures of this vain world! Let us, then, endeavor to appreciate more highly the great value and efficacy of secret prayer as a means of securing to others the

rich blessings of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Another way in which our private devotion may have an influence on the life and destiny of others, is through its effects on our own character, temper, and disposition. There is a fitness in all the arrangements of creation, providence, and redemption. The iceberg never promotes the growth of vegetation. The frosts of winter do not cause the bud and the tender flowers to spring forth. And the heart that is filled with envy, jealousy, and revenge has no power to win souls to Christ. But the man whose evil passions have been subdued, and whose love, mercy, and benevolence have been excited and strengthened by the devotions of the closet is a savor of life unto life wherever he goes. He is a living illustration of the power of the Gospel on the soul, and must always have an attractive as well as a transforming influence on the minds and hearts of others.

If, then, we would be good, and do good, and glorify our Father who is in heaven, let us not forget the duties and privileges of

secret prayer; let us often retire to our closets, and when we have shut the door, let us pray to our Father who is in secret, and our Father who seeth in secret will surely reward us openly.

CHAPTER III.

ADVANTAGES AND UTILITY OF SOCIAL PRAYER.

ALL the advantages of secret prayer belong, also, in some degree, to social prayer. It is true that the latter is not so favorable for self-examination; for the free, full, and open confession of our sins, and of an humble, contrite, and devotional frame of mind, as the former. It is not so free from those popular and worldly influences that serve to cherish in our hearts a vain, proud, and ostentatious spirit.

But it has, nevertheless, some peculiar advantages. Otherwise our blessed Savior would never have said, "If *two* of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where *two* or *three* are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* Man is not altogether selfish.

*Matt. xviii: 19, 20.

He is a social being, and he needs the influence of sympathy as a means even to the right cultivation of his own nature.

> "O, there is a need that on men's hearts should fall
> A spirit that can sympathize with all."

Where, for instance, can we find another place so favorable for the cultivation of our parental feelings as the family altar? Around it meet and cluster a thousand tender and sacred associations. There we see, in the most interesting light, our relations, duties, and obligations to our own offspring. There we are made to sympathize with them in their joys and their sorrows, in their hopes and their fears, in their trials and their temptations, in their fortunes and their misfortunes; and there we are led to think most seriously how awful a thing it is to be a child, to be a youth, to be a man, to be a candidate for immortality, and yet to be opposed by all the evil influences of the world, the flesh, and the devil. There we feel our common dependence on God for every good and perfect gift; there we feel our mutual need of a Savior's blood, and of the comforting, sanctifying, and sustaining influences of the Holy Spirit;

and there, if ever, our souls yearn over our children, while the very fountains of our being are stirred up in thanksgiving, and praise, and supplication to the Father of the whole creation for his care and his tender mercies over them.

The same principle will also apply to the other relations of life. If we desire to sympathize deeply with our fellow-mortals, we must associate with them, we must pray with them and for them. We must go to the house of mourning, we must not forget the prayer-meeting, and we must often kneel together in the great congregation.

But social prayer is a benefit not only to ourselves; it is also a powerful and divinely-appointed means for the conviction, conversion, sanctification, and salvation of others. This is especially true in the family. The relation of a parent and child is one of the nearest, dearest, and most interesting on earth, and hence it involves an influence that is peculiar to itself. The example of the parent is to the child, during the most impressible period of its existence, the standard of all that is right, and noble, and magnanimous. Its greatest effort, there-

fore, is to imitate him. What he says and does, it attempts to say and do also. If he swears, it swears; if he prays, it prays; but if he neglects the throne of grace, it will neglect the throne of the universe and Him that sits upon it.

For the proper exercise of this influence over the child, the parent is, of course, responsible. Wherever much is given, much will also be required. This is a law of the universe, from which none are exempted.

What an awful account, then, will some parents have to render concerning this part of their stewardship, when every man shall appear before the great white throne, to receive the sentence according to the deeds done in his own body, whether they be good or whether they be evil! To be able, on that day, to stand on the right hand of the Supreme Judge of the universe, and to say, Behold, here am I, Lord, and here are also the children which thou hast given me, would, methinks, be joy enough to fill the heart of any ransomed man.

But who could bear to stand on the left hand of the Judge, and there to hear the accusations and criminations of his own offspring! to hear a

doomed son or daughter say, Father, *you* have brought me to this end! You never taught me to read and to study that Book by which I am now to be judged! You never directed me to the Lamb of God that once took away the sin of the world! You never taught me to pray to Him who once said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you!" You never led me to the sanctuary, the house of prayer and praise! You taught me to swear, to profane the name of God; to seek pleasure at the theater, at the ball-room, and at the card-table! But you never taught me, either by precept or example, to seek happiness at the Fountain of Life! You never taught me to seek forgiveness at the throne of grace! And now the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are compelled to stand on the ill-boding side of the throne of judgment!

Courteous reader, where will you stand on that day? And if you are a parent, where will your children stand? This is the proper time to answer and settle these solemn questions. If you have no delight in the worship of God here, do not flatter yourself that you will delight in

it hereafter. If you do not teach your children to pray in the world that now is, they may never be permitted to pray in that which is to come.

I know some heady, heartless, narrow-minded, nominal Christians will here ask for a specific "Thus saith the Lord," before they will consent to bring together the members of their respective families once, twice, or three times a day, to unite in the social worship of Jehovah. This class of men are always anxious to know how little they may serve God, and how much they may serve the world, the flesh, and the devil, and yet reach heaven at last. If they can only escape the torments of hell, and just barely squeeze through the gates into the eternal city, they will be abundantly satisfied. And hence their constant inquiry is, *Must* I read my Bible? *Must* I often retire to my closet? *Must* I pray with and for my family? *Must* I attend the prayer-meeting? *Must* I, on every Lord's day, commemorate the death and resurrection of the Lord of life and glory?

But the sincere followers of Him who esteemed it more than his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father in heaven, use words of a very

different category. They humbly and earnestly ask, *May* I do all these things? *May* I worship Him that made heaven and earth? *May* I approach a throne of mercy? *May* I, in the closet, in my family, in the prayer-meeting, and in the great congregation presume to make known my requests, and pour out the desires of my heart to the King of kings and the Lord of lords?

The tenor and spirit of these two classes of interrogatories differ as widely as the judicial accents that will forever settle the destiny of the righteous and the wicked on the day of judgment. And they indicate states of mind and heart, of thought and feeling, that are just as different, *in kind*, as the thoughts and purposes of the loyal and rebel angels. There can be no compulsion, no constrained service in the kingdom of God. "Thy people," said the Holy Spirit, by the inspiration of David, "shall be *willing* in the day of thy power; in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth." *

If, even then, there had been no altar of in-

* Ps. cx: 3.

cense in the tabernacle of Moses; if Solomon had never said, "Train up a child in the way he should go;" * if Paul had not added, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" † if there were not, in the whole Bible, a single precept or example bearing directly on the subject of family prayer, it would be enough for the man who has a right conception of his own wants, and of the wants of his children, to know that it is his *privilege* at any time, and at all times, to lead them to the mercy-seat, and there, with and for them, to implore the mercy, the protection, the sustaining grace, and the all-comprehensive blessing of him who has said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." ‡

And, hence, the most pious have always been the most regular and constant in their family devotions. Indeed, we have never seen any very strong indications of vital piety where family worship has been neglected. We have known many parents who could very eloquently

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* Prov. xxii: 6. † Eph. vi: 4. ‡ Matt. xix: 14.

discuss and analyze the mint, the anise, and the cummin of Christianity; who could philosophize and speculate very learnedly on some favorite theory of the Christian institution; but we have never known a man of high reputation for practical godliness who lived in the habitual neglect of any department of social worship. And in the very nature of the case this is practically impossible. Piety is one of the most active and diffusive elements in the moral universe; and, therefore, as long as prayer has a favorable reflex influence on our own hearts; as long as it is a means of awakening the conscience, refining the moral feelings, and sanctifying the life of our children and associates; as long as it is a condition on which God has promised to bestow his blessings on mankind, so long will every sincere Christian seek to maintain in his own family, and in all the assemblies of the saints, the social worship of the Lord.

I know something of

> "The various hindrances we meet
> In coming to a mercy-seat."

But these should only excite us to greater earnestness and zeal in all our devotions. We have

all much to do, and the time is short. The day is far spent, and the night is at hand when no man can work. The character, too, of the enemies with whom we have to contend should also greatly excite and alarm us: "For we wrestle not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in the heavenly regions." *

While, therefore, we put on the whole armor of God, let us not forget to pray always with *all prayer and supplication*, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having overcome all, to stand. For

Restraining prayer we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armor bright,
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.
While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when through weakness they had failed,
That moment Amalek prevailed.
Have you no words? Ah! think again;
Words flow apace when you complain,

* Eph. vi: 12.

And fill your fellow-creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.
Were half the breath, thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oft'ner be,
"HEAR WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR ME.

CHAPTER IV.

WHO HAS A RIGHT TO PRAY?

THIS is a very solemn and interesting question; and, on account of its great practical importance, it certainly demands our very serious and candid consideration. In the preceding chapters, I have endeavored to show that prayer is a very great privilege; and that, when properly offered, it is attended with the very best of consequences. But it does not hence follow that all men have a right to pray. The right of petition is a privilege granted by every parent to his children. But, nevertheless, they may forfeit this right; and whether they shall ever again be allowed to enjoy it, may depend on the will of the parent.

Now we are all, by creation, the children of God; and we have, by transgression, forfeited every claim to his mercy and his benevolence. Whether, then, we shall ever again be allowed to lisp his name– whether we shall be per-

mitted to approach his throne of mercy, and to touch the scepter of his love, or whether we shall, like the angels who kept not their first estate, be forever deprived of the right of petition, confession, praise, and thanksgiving, must, of course, depend wholly on the will of God, as it has been revealed in the Holy Scriptures. From this standard there is no appeal. All conclusions on this subject drawn from any other *data* than the facts, the precepts, and the promises of the Word of God, are as unsatisfactory as the baseless fabric of a vision, or the empty vagaries of a bewildered imagination.

What, then, have the prophets and the apostles taught concerning the privilege of prayer? May all men pray? or is the right of petition restricted to any particular class of persons? In his letter to the Romans, Paul makes a remark which throws much light on this subject. "Whatsoever," says he, "is not of faith is sin."* But the prayer of the unbeliever is not of faith. Therefore, the prayer of the unbeliever is sin. This argument is entirely conclusive. If we acknowledge the Divine authen-

* Rom. xvi: 23.

ticity of the Bible, there is no escape from the preceding conclusion. And this being admitted, cuts off from the mercy-seat all classes of unbelievers.

The same sentiment is also taught in the epistle to the Hebrews. "Without faith," says the inspired author, "it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* This is equally plain and convincing; and so, also, is the following testimony of David and Solomon: "If," says the former, "I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me;"† and the latter adds, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination."‡ These passages harmonize perfectly with the testimony of Paul already quoted. Regarding iniquity in the heart, and neglect of Divine law, are but indications of the want of that faith which works by love, which purifies the heart, and which overcomes the world, and without which it is impossible to please God in any thing.

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* Heb. xi: 6. † Psa. lxvi: 18. ‡ Prov. xxviii: 9.

No man, therefore, according to the concurring testimony of these three inspired witnesses, has a right to pray without faith. It is true that the Christian may pray for faith; *i. e.*, for an *increase* of faith. But to pray while the heart is full of unbelief, and while it is estranged from God by wicked works, is, to say the least of it, but an act of solemn mockery, and a daring insult to the infinite majesty of Jehovah.

Want of faith, then, is a Divine restriction upon the right of petition. And may we not add that it, in connection with that penitential change of heart which a living faith always produces is the only restriction. Can any one believe with all his heart, and not pray? Is not prayer a natural and necessary consequence of faith? Is it not as natural for the believer to adore and to bless his Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer as it is to love him or to serve him in any other way? Is not prayer, next to repentance, one of the first fruits of that all-pervading, soul-transforming and regenerating principle by which God purifies the heart, makes it a fit temple for his spirit, and gives new life and energy to the soul? And was it

not in consequence of this faith that the poor publican, feeling his own utter unworthiness, and trusting in God as his only hope, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"* Was it not also owing to the power of faith in the soul that the dying thief was heard to exclaim in his last agony, as he hung by the side of our blessed Redeemer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" And was it not because his prayer was sanctified by faith and repentance that Jesus so promptly replied, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise?"† What else than the all-subduing, converting, and sanctifying power of faith could, in so short a time, have transformed a thief, a blasphemer, and a scoffer into a humble, confiding, and acceptable worshiper of the suffering Savior. For, says Matthew, "The thieves, also, who were crucified with him, cast the same revilings and mockings into his teeth."‡ But when one of them saw the God-like majesty, the meekness,

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* Luke xviii: 13. † Luke xxiii: 42, 43.
‡ Matt. xxi: 44.

the love, and the humility of our blessed Savior, and when he heard his prayers for his persecutors, he was pierced to the heart, and said to the other malefactor, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing amiss." Then turning to Jesus, he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

"His prayer the dying Jesus hears,
And instantly replies,
To-day thy parting soul shall be
With me in paradise."

The case of Cornelius is also in point. It was the strong and living faith of that devout centurion that caused his prayers and his alms to go up as a memorial before God. He was not, indeed, at that time, a follower of Jesus Christ, because he had not then been instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. But he was an honest man. He was a truth-loving and truth-seeking man. He believed in the God of Israel, and prayed to him always. And *for this reason,* as well as for his works of

faith and labors of love, he was honored as the first convert from the Gentile world.

These remarks might be very much prolonged, but it is unnecessary. The facts before us are, I think, sufficient to warrant the conclusion *that want of faith, with that change of heart which it immediately produces, is the only barrier between any sinner and the mercy-seat.* If God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotton Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life; if Jesus Christ has, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man; if, through his blood, a new and living way has been opened up through which all men may come to God; if the only obstacle between any man and the mercy-seat is in the man himself, in the lusts and passions of his own evil heart; if faith is the principle by which all these are to be removed; and if it inclines a man to pray just as naturally and as necessarily as it inclines him to love or to repent, then why may he not at once, under the very first impulses of that faith which lays hold of the promises of God, pour out his prayers and his supplications to the Father of all mercies, the God of all comfort? If this was

the privilege of the Ninevites, of the publican, of the thief on the cross, of Cornelius the centurion, why is it not still the right and privilege of every one who believes, with all his heart, whatever God has revealed to him concerning life, death, and immortality?

To all this, so far as my memory serves, I have heard but one objection from any who profess to be the followers of Christ. It is said by some of them that the incense offered on the golden altar of the tabernacle was typical of the prayers of the saints; that that altar was not in the court of the Gentiles, but in the holy place, the type of the church; that none but priests were allowed to offer incense upon it; and hence it is inferred that none but those who, through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, have entered the church of the living God, have any right to pray. This inference, too, it has been alleged, is further sustained by the fact that, on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand persons, pierced to the heart, cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" the apostles said nothing to them in reference to prayer, but simply commanded them to repent and be baptized in the name of

Jesus Christ, in order that they might obtain the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This seems to be a plausible objection, and and we shall, therefore, endeavor to consider it fairly and candidly. Let us, then, in the first place, inquire into the validity of the argument drawn from the rites of the tabernacle. It is evidently based on the hypothesis that the incense offered on the golden altar was a *perfect* type or symbolic representation of all the prayers that could ever be rightfully and legally made under the reign of the Messiah. But is not this a mere assumption? Is it not, indeed, wholly inconsistent with what Paul has taught respecting the typical institution of Moses? Has he not said, in his letter to the Hebrews, that the law was only a shadow of good things to come, and not a perfect similitude of any one thing whatever in that new and better covenant which was established upon better promises? And is there not, therefore, very great danger of pressing these analogies beyond their true and legitimate bearings? It is, for example, a general truth that Canaan was a type of heaven; but we must not, there-

fore, expect to find, in the latter place, the Hivites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites. Just so it is with the tabernacle and its services. Because the priests daily entered the Holy Place, and went out of it as often, it does not follow that the Christian priesthood may daily enter the Church of Christ and leave it *ad libitum*. Neither does it follow that the light of the golden candlestick is now to be confined wholly within the limits of the Sanctuary, nor that it is now unlawful to burn incense or to pray in any other place than in the courts of the tabernacle. Such restrictions are inconsistent with both the letter and the spirit of the Christian institution. Equally fallacious is the argument drawn from the opening of the reign of heaven on the day of Pentecost. Logically stated, it stands thus: The laws of the kingdom of heaven being uniform and immutable during the entire reign of the Messiah, whatever was not required of the first converts to Christianity must still be regarded as unnecessary and sinful. Prayer before baptism was not required of the first converts; therefore, prayer before baptism is a mere sinful act of will-worship.

Now, is it not plain to every student of the Bible that the minor premise of this argument is a mere assumption, wholly unwarranted by any thing that is recorded in the second chapter of the Acts or in any other parts of the sacred Scriptures? Would not the same fallacious mode of reasoning bring us to the conclusion that the Philippian jailor and his household were saved by faith alone? Would it not also serve to prove that the Pentecostian converts were translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, without love to their Savior and without the confession of his name? "When pierced to the heart by that Word of inspiration which is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow;" and when under the influence of that faith which penetrates our whole nature, transforming and renewing it "after the image of Him that created us," they suddenly cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" not one word was then said about love, the chief of all the virtues; nor about confession, which Paul says is unto salvation. Why was this? Was it because that, in the case of

the Pentecostians, love and confession were unnecessary? Nay, verily; but because they were the legitimate fruits of that faith which works by love, which purifies the heart, and which makes all who are in possession of it humble, penitent, and prayerful.

The proof, then, that the Pentecostian converts did love their Savior; that they did humbly and gratefully confess his holy name; that they did pray with all the ardor of a newly-awakened conscience, is not to be found in the very brief and condensed narrative of Luke, but in the necessary and legitimate tendency of all true and saving faith.

No man who understands the principle of gravitation wants any other evidence that bodies have weight on all parts of the earth's surface; no more does the Christian philosopher want evidence that the first fruits of faith are always love, gratitude, penitence, and prayer.

But for those who desire it, we have other evidence than that of faith. We have the case of Saul of Tarsus; and we have the testimony of the Holy Spirit, not only that he prayed before he was baptized, but also that this fact was mentioned by the Lord himself *as a proof of*

his sincere repentance. "And the Lord said unto Ananias, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; *for behold he prayeth.*"*

If any further evidence should be required in the case of Saul, it may be found in the testimony of Luke: "And now," said the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of Ananias, "why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, CALLING *on the name of the Lord.*† The intelligent reader will observe that the participle *calling* (επιχαλεσαμενος) is not in the future tense; it is in the first aorist, and evidently implies that it was both the privilege and the duty of Saul to pray to the Lord while rising from his kneeling or reclining posture, while preparing for baptism, while going to the water, and while buried in the water.

It is now, I think, my time to construct an argument on the uniformity and immutability of the laws and usages of Christ's kingdom, and to the candid reader I respectfully submit the

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* Acts ix: 11. † Acts xxii: 16.

following: *Whatever, under the reign of Heaven, was right in the case of any one believer before his baptism, is still equally so in every similar case. It was right for Saul of Tarsus to pray after he believed and before he was baptized; and, consequently, it is right for every truly penitent believer to pray to the Lord, at all times, whether before or after his baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

This argument is, I think, absolutely conclusive; and I, therefore, sincerely and ardently hope that we shall hereafter hear no more of that cold, lifeless, anti-Christian theory that would not at the moment when faith first overcomes the enmity of the human heart, so much as to allow the believer to raise his voice to the heavens, and say with the poor publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" that would require him to walk from the church to the water, like a culprit to his prison, without one pious emotion of prayer, praise, or thanksgiving to the Lord of life and glory! and that would, even in the water, stifle the spirit of prayer, and not allow one petition to escape from the lips of the believing penitent until he rises from the

liquid grave, purified by the efficacy and application of that blood which cleanses from all sin!

There is a time, says Solomon, for every thing that is done under the sun; and there is surely no better time to cultivate the spirit of prayer, and to impress upon our hearts the conviction that we depend upon God for every blessing, than during the first days and hours of our conversion. If this part of our religious education were more strictly attended to by elders and evangelists; if our young converts were encouraged to pray more, to renounce all dependence upon self, and to commit themselves wholly to God and the Word of his grace, we would soon have fewer prayerless professors among us, fewer heady and contumacious exposers of the faults and errors of others, while they are themselves as destitute of the spirit of prayer as the brutes that perish! Alas, how very applicable to many professing Christians are the following words of Jehovah to the prophet Isaiah concerning his ancient people: "The ox," said he, "knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth

not consider." How many still live and feast daily upon the bounties of God's providence without one emotion of gratitude to him from whom comes down every good and perfect gift! How many wear the Christian name who never pray, who never retire to their closets, who never worship with their families, and whose voice, though eloquent in strife and debate, is never heard in the public supplication and thanksgiving of the saints! "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord; they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger; they have gone away backward."

Brethren, let us all cultivate in our hearts more and more the spirit of prayer; let us pray without ceasing; let us in every thing give thanks; let us often retire with our blessed Redeemer, to spend a few moments, at least, if not whole nights, in prayer to our Heavenly Father. In this way we shall be happier in life, more triumphant in death, and better prepared to join the general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, and

who cease not day nor night to worship God, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

CHAPTER V.

FOR WHAT MAY THE BELIEVER PRAY.

THIS is a question of much interest to every child of God. Indeed, it has always been a matter of deep concern to all persons who recognize the right of petition, and the Divine agency in the government of the universe. But until life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel, it was among the mysteries. No Gentile philosopher could ever answer it. And even the Jewish doctors, with the book of types and prophecies in their hand, signally failed in their attempts to solve this very interesting problem. Their views of redemption were too contracted, too carnal, and too selfish to allow them to comprehend the fullness of the scheme of God's philanthropy.

But when it was known and practically demonstrated that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have

everlasting life;"* that "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man;"† that the Holy Spirit was sent to "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,"‡ then it was that both Jews and Gentiles began to understand more perfectly their rights and immunities as the citizens of the kingdom of heaven; then it was that Paul could exhort, with the full assurance of faith, "That supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men;"‖ and then it was that the beloved John could say, with the same confidence, "If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."§

The will of God, then, is the only limitation to the believer's right of petition; and this, thanks be to God! is always in perfect harmony with the happiness of the individual, and with the very highest and best interests of the entire universe. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live."¶ "The Lord is not slack

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* John iii: 16. † Heb. ii: 9. ‡ John xvi: 8.
‖ 1 Tim. ii: 1. § 1 John v: 14. ¶ Ezekiel xxxiii: 11.

concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* The believer, then, is divinely authorized to pray for any thing and every thing that pertains to the enjoyment, the justification, the sanctification, and the eternal redemption of himself, and of every other man. "For," says Paul, "this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."†

The question, then, whether the humble, penitent, unbaptized believer has a right to pray for the forgiveness of his sins, must have arisen either from a want of knowledge respecting his privileges, or from a very gross misconception of the true province of faith. *The believer has a right to pray, at all times and under all circumstances, for any thing that is according to the will of God; else the blood of Jesus Christ had never flowed for their expiation. And, therefore, the believer, whether baptized or unbaptized, has a right to pray for the pardon of his own sins and*

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* 2 Pet. iii: 9. † 1 Tim. ii: 3, 4.

the sins of all other men, just as certainly as he has a right to pray for any thing else.

But he has no right to pray for their unconditional forgiveness. He has no right to pray that God would pardon his sins while he neglects the means or the condition of pardon. "*Watch and pray,*" is the order of the Divine government. The farmer who attempts to raise a crop of corn simply by plowing, and harrowing, and sowing, and reaping, without, at the same time, praying that the blessing of God may be upon the work of his hands, is a practical atheist. God may, indeed, in the plenitude of his mercy, give, even to the wicked, his heart's desire. "He maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."* But, nevertheless, the man who thus plows and sows is a fool; he hath said in his heart, "There is no God."† And, on the other hand, the man who attempts to supply his granaries simply by praying, while he neglects the means that God has appointed with reference to this end and object, is, to say the least, a very great

* Matt. v: 45. † Psa. xiv: 1.

simpleton, if, indeed, he is not a willful sinner; for he is evidently praying contrary to the will of God.

Now, all this is just as true in the kingdom of grace as it is in the kingdom of nature. It is just as certainly the order of God's moral government as it is the order of his physical government. The man who attempts to procure the pardon of his sins without prayer, by simply attending to any positive institutions, whether appointed by man or ordained by God, is a mere formalist. And, on the contrary, he who would obtain the full assurance of pardon, by praying or agonizing at the mourner's bench, or at any other bench, without confessing the name of Jesus Christ, and being baptized, by his authority, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is certainly in darkness respecting the order of God's own appointment; and has great need that some one instruct him in the way of the Lord more perfectly.

We would not willfully discourage the earnest and fervent prayer of any humble, penitent believer. His words are a part of the fuel that serves to supply the flame of love in his own

heart. We say to him, let them ever burn; let the flame continually increase. But if he is unbaptized, we would also say to him, in the language of Ananias to the humble, penitent, believing, and prayerful Saul, "*Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*"* Let him not cease to call upon the name of the Lord; let him pray while rising up; let him pray while going to the water; let him pray while immersed in the water; let him pray while rising out of the water; let him always pray; but let him not, at the same time, neglect the other conditions on which God has so graciously promised to forgive his sins. All exclusive theories respecting conversion, justification, sanctification, and redemption, whether they relate to the will of God alone, or to the blood of Christ alone, or to the work of the Spirit alone, or to the word alone, or to faith alone, or to prayer alone, or to baptism alone, or to works alone, are utterly inconsistent with the Divine plan, and should, therefore, be at once wholly repudi-

* Acts xxii: 16.

ated and renounced by every lover of truth and order.

We are fully aware that some very plausible theories of pardon and justification have been framed on the ground of God's foreknowledge and eternal purposes respecting man. But what do all these signify so long as it is written, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*"* And again: "*Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"† With these words before us, how can any man—how *dare* any man say that baptism is not a condition of pardon? that the sinner is saved by faith alone? or by faith and repentance alone? or by faith, and repentance, and prayer alone? In the citation from Mark, baptism is connected with faith, as a condition of salvation, by our Lord himself; and in the quotation from Acts, it is, under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit, conjunctively associated with repentance, and the relation of both to the remission of sins, is expressed by the same

* Mark xvi: 16. † Acts ii: 38.

preposition "*for*" (εις); so that, if repentance is for the remission of sins, then, beyond all reasonable doubt, baptism is also for the remisssion of sins.

How it serves to procure pardon, Paul very happily illustrates in the sixth chapter of his letter to the Romans. In the close of the fifth chapter, he speaks of the great and superabundant fullness of the grace of God in the scheme of redemption. "Moreover," says he, "the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."*

But just at this point of his argument Paul perceived that the Jew would, in all probability, urge an objection. To the blind Pharisee or Sadducee this seemed to be entirely too much grace, and he would, therefore, no doubt, attempt to turn the whole argument into ridicule, or to reduce it to practical absurdity by endeavoring to show that it was only an inducement to sin

* Rom. v: 20, 21.

more and more. "What shall we say then?" would be his reply. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Shall we not sin more and more in order that the grace of God may abound more and more? "By no means," says Paul. The supposition implies a manifest absurdity; for "how can we that have died to sin live any longer therein?" How can we who have been separated from sin continue to live in it? But, Paul, will you please to inform us when we were separated from our sins? Why, says he, "Do you not know that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ *were baptized into his death?*"*

A little reflection on the meaning of the preposition "*into*," will enable us to perceive and to appreciate the full force of the Apostle's argument. It is a participle of transition, and always implies a change of state, and hence, also, a change of influences. Thus, when a man, to avoid the violence of a storm, enters into a house, he is shielded and protected by the house; when he recklessly plunges into debt, he suffers from the annoyances and inconveniences of debt;

* Rom. vi: 3

and when he falls into a paroxysm of anger, love, or any other passion, he can not but experience and notice all its various influences, whether for good or for evil.

Just so the man who, by the Divine arrangement, is baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, is made to realize and to enjoy all the benefits of that death. Baptism, then, procures our pardon, not by means of any intrinsic virtue in itself, abstractly considered, but simply by bringing us into contact with that blood which cleanses from all sin. And, "therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." *

The sinner, then, must first believe, and then repent, and then pray. But he must not stop here; he has not yet reached the place of legal pardon; he has not yet come to the ordinance in which God has promised to blot out his sins through the blood of Christ. He must publicly, also, confess the name of Jesus; he must be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the

* Rom. vi: 4.

Son, and of the Holy Spirit; so that, being thus brought by the Divine appointment under all the influences of the Messiah's death, and into contact with his precious blood, he may be saved from his sins and thoroughly cleansed from all unrighteousness. He then rises from the baptismal grave to walk in the straight and narrow way that leads to honor, glory, and immortality. These are the conditions of salvation from all our past sins; without the observance of which no man, since the coronation of the Messiah, ever did or ever can enjoy the full assurance that his sins have been forgiven.

The conditions of pardon proposed to the naturalized citizen of the kingdom of heaven vary somewhat from those which we have considered. But they do not differ so much as many seem to suppose. The grace of God, the blood of Jesus Christ, the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the prayer and works of faith and repentance, are all variously invoked in that life of holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

It is true that John says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteous-

ness."* But this is not an absolute and unqualified condition of pardon. Unless we continue to live soberly, righteously, and godly, our prayers will very soon become an abomination in the sight of God. It is only in answer to the prayers of the man who, giving all diligence, continues to add to his faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, love; that God has promised to bestow the crown of life, the harp of gold, and the palm of victory.

Let us, then, dear brethren, never forget our birth-rights. Let us pray always; but let us also *labor* to enter into that rest which remains for the people of God.

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*1 John i: 9.

CHAPTER VI.

TIME AND PLACE OF PRAYER.

"THERE is," says Solomon, "a time for every purpose under the heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace."*

What, then, it may be asked, is the proper time to pray? The full and explicit answer to

* Eccl. iii: 1–8.

this question was reserved for a greater than Solomon. In the eighteenth chapter of the testimony of Luke, our blessed Lord taught his disciples that "men *ought always to pray and not to grow weary;*" adding, by way of illustration, and for the sake of their encouragement, the following very sententious parable: "There was in a city," he said, "a certain judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, 'Avenge me of my adversary.' And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And will not God avenge his own elect *who cry day and night* unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh will he find faith on the earth?"*

The design of this parable is evidently to illustrate the last clause of the first verse; or

* Luke xviii: 2–8.

to induce men to pray constantly, even under the greatest discouragements. Every circumstance in the parable is selected with reference to this object. The judge was unrighteous; but God is righteous. The judge had no regard nor respect for the widow; but God esteems and loves all his children. The judge had never encouraged this poor, helpless woman to ask any thing at his hands; he despised her petitions; but God invites all who believe in him to pray to him. If, then, the mere importunity of the poor widow, whom the judge neither loved, nor feared, nor respected, moved him to grant her request, how much more shall the constant and fervent prayers of the saints, offered up in harmony with the will of God, and the just principles of his holy government, induce him to bestow upon them, in his own proper time and way, the full measure of their hearts' desire? Nothing, then, is more reasonable than the proposition of our Savior, that *men ought always to pray and not faint or become weary.*

The same duty, or rather the same privilege, is also frequently and earnestly urged by the apostle Paul, in his letters to the different

churches. He exhorted the Romans to "be fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; *continuing instant in prayer.*"* To the Ephesians, he said, "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;* and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel."† And, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, he commanded them to "*pray without ceasing.*"‡

To cultivate the habit of constancy in prayer is, therefore, both the duty and the privilege of every Christian. It does not follow that he must always be on his knees in

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*Rom. xii: 11, 12. †Eph. vi: 14–19. ‡1 Thess. v: 17.

his closet, or in his family, or in the public assembly. This would be wholly incompatible with many other duties and precepts. But even in the busiest scenes and conflicts of earth, the Christian may always raise his heart to God. While laboring in the cabinet, in the senate-chamber, in the counting-room, in the field, or in the dungeon, he may always have his affections set on things that are eternal, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. In the midst of rebellion and anarchy, David could say, "O, Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."* And under circumstances still more embarrassing and perplexing, Christ had time to exclaim, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."†

The prayers of the Christian, then, are restricted by no limits of either time or place. The spirit of prayer should flow as regularly and as constantly from the heart of every believing penitent as the spirit of love and gratitude. Every disciple of Jesus Christ should habitually acknowledge the Lord in all his

* 2 Samuel xv: 31. † Luke xxiii: 34.

ways. He should feel that he lives in God, that he moves in God, and that in God he has his being. He should constantly and perseveringly cultivate an humble, grateful, and devotional state of mind and heart, that would continually draw out his whole soul after God, and that would always constrain him to exclaim with David:

"As the hart, with eager looks,
Panteth for the water brooks,
So my soul, athirst for thee,
Pants the living God to see." *

But the sincere Christian will not be satisfied with this kind of habitual and constant devotion. He will also seek frequent opportunities of retiring as far as possible from all the distracting influences of the world, in order that he may worship God with more concentration of both thought and feeling. The eye commands a general view of a very wide and extended area. But if we wish to cultivate the faculty of sight, we must limit our field of vision to a single point. The ear is capable

* Psa. xlii: 1.

of receiving and of partially enjoying the pleasures of a thousand melodies. But to improve in the highest possible degree the sense of hearing, it is necessary that we confine our attention to one strain of consistent harmony. All other sounds must, for the time being, be eliminated. It is just so with every other power and susceptibility of the body, soul, and spirit of man. Its proper cultivation requires the concentrated energy of specific influences divinely adapted to its own nature and capacity.

While, therefore, the Christian may pray every-where, and pray without ceasing, he should never forget his own closet, nor his family devotions, nor the worship of the public assembly. In each and all of these there is a divine adaptation to the wants of our fallen nature.

But when shall these special duties be attended to? What time shall be appropriated for the enjoyment of these privileges? How often should the Christian retire to his closet? How often should he worship with his family and with the public assembly?

It may, at first, seem to be difficult, if, in-

deed, not altogether impracticable, to lay down any general rules on this subject. The circumstances of different individuals, families, and communities are so various that no one rule or regulation would seem to be applicable to all cases. And certain it is that no arrangement is just and equitable that would, at any time, prevent any person, any family, or any congregation of disciples from drawing near to a throne of grace with an humble boldness, in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. While the mercy-seat is always accessible, the true followers of the Lamb will continue to worship God, individually and socially, according to their own sense and appreciation of their respective wants, duties, and privileges.

But this need not interfere with the strict observance of some general rules and regulations. David could say, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth."* But, at the same time, it seems to have been his custom to retire three times a day from his court to

* Psa. xxxiv: 1.

his closet, to worship the God of Israel. "As for me," says he, "I will call upon God: and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice." * Daniel, too, was a man of business. The cares of the Medo-Persian Empire hung as a heavy weight upon his soul. But all these things, superadded to the impious decree of Darius, could not turn that aged servant of God from what had then become a habit of his life. For "when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." †

Christian reader, do you want to grow in grace? Do you want to make rapid progress in the divine life? Do you want to be like David and like Daniel? Do you want to die the death of these righteous men, and to share in the joys and honors of their glorious and happy destiny? Then let me say to you, im-

* Psa. lv: 16, 17. † Dan. vi: 10.

itate their example. Live as they lived. Retire to your closet at least three times every day; and let the burden of your prayer be, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me: and lead me in the way everlasting."*

The general law with respect to the times and the frequency of family or social worship seems to be indicated with sufficient clearness in the typical system, by the offering of incense on the golden altar every morning and every evening. That the incense was a symbol of the prayers of the saints, is quite evident from several passages in both the Old Testament and the New. Thus David exclaims: "*Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense;* and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."† Luke also says, that while Zachariah "executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord; *and the whole*

* Psa. cxxxix: 23, 24. † Psa. cxli: 2.

multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." * In the Apocalypse of St. John, the prayers of the saints are expressly identified with the incense of the sanctuary. Thus, it is said, when the Lamb took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne, "the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps *and golden vials full of odors* (*or incense*), *which are the prayers of saints.*" †

That the worship which is here symbolized by the incense burned on the golden altar was *social* in its character, is evident not only from the general nature and object of the tabernacle service, but also from the concurrent testimony of Luke and John. The former says, "The *whole multitude* of the people were praying without at the time of incense." And in vision, the latter saw an angel come and stand at the altar, "having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of *all the saints* upon the golden altar which was before the throne." ‡

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* Luke i: 8–10. † Rev. v: 8. ‡ Rev. viii: 3.

But the incense was renewed upon the altar every evening and every morning; and hence it would seem to follow that the prayers of *all the saints* should ascend every morning and every evening, from the family or social circle, as incense before God.

I know that this conclusion is, by some, regarded as unsatisfactory. The Holy Place, they say, was not a type of the family, but of the Church; and hence they infer that the burning of the incense on the golden altar was symbolical, not of family, but of ecclesiastical worship.

But in what sense, we may be allowed to inquire, is this possible? Surely not in a collective capacity. To collect together into one place, every morning and every evening, all who belong to the true tabernacle or church of the living God is practically impossible. The incense can be offered only as Christians are associated together in families or small ecclesiæ. And as the sanctuary was only an imperfect representation of the Church, and not the very image of it; as the Church is subdivided into many churches, worshiping in different localities; as some of these were, in

apostolic times, found in single households; and as the leading idea of the symbol seems to be that of social worship, I respectfully submit whether it is not the worship of the church, as it is distributed into families and other household associations, that was typified by the burning of the incense on the golden altar.

But, be this as it may, the duty of holding family worship, at least every evening and every morning, is abundantly evident from various other considerations. This is one of those essential helps that every parent will be anxious to secure, who realizes the amount of his own responsibility, and who earnestly desires to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. To all such, positive enactments would be wholly superfluous. So long as God's throne of mercy is accessible to every believing penitent, so long will every pious parent esteem it one of his greatest privileges to pray with and for his children, at least every evening and every morning.

My limits will allow me to add only a few words in reference to the frequency of public

worship. This, of course, must, to some extent, depend on the force of circumstances. In primitive times, the churches all met on every Lord's day, to attend to the apostles' teaching, and to the fellowship, and to the breaking of the loaf, and to the prayers.

But this law expresses only the minimum number of their meetings. There is abundant evidence that, as it was in the days of Malachi, so it was also in the days of the apostles, "they that feared the Lord spake *often* one to another." * They had many social meetings for mutual edification, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. And hence Paul commanded the Hebrews not to forsake the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is, but to exhort one another daily; and to do this the more frequently as they saw the day of God's righteous vengeance coming upon the Jewish nation. †

This, then, my dear brethren, should be our rule. Our profession requires this. We have no other rules and regulations on this subject than those which were given by the apostles to

* Malachi iv: 16. † Heb. x: 25, and iii: 13.

the primitive churches. And, if we were to attend fewer political meetings, fewer Odd-fellow and Masonic associations, and fewer of those fashionable parties and public fairs, in which are displayed little else than the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, we might have more time to attend the prayer-meetings of our respective churches. And, in many cases, it might be practicable to exhort one another even daily, in the capacity of a social meeting, that none of us may be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

CHAPTER VII.

MODE OR MANNER OF PRAYER.

THE question, How may we pray? is a matter of very great interest to every one who seeks the favor of God. Much depends on the manner of doing any thing. And hence, when Christ ceased to pray in a certain place, "one of his desciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."*

It may then be expedient, before I bring this series of articles to a close, to offer a few suggestions in reference to the proper manner of prayer. The following, it is hoped, will be sufficient to induce many of our readers to enter upon a more full, critical, and thorough examination of the whole subject.

1. We must pray with all humility of mind

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* Luke xi: 1.

and heart. This, indeed, is implied in what has been said in the fourth chapter. Humility flows out of a true and living faith, just as naturally and as certainly as does repentance, love, or any other one of the Christian graces.

But, as pride has been the cause of all the disorder that has ever disturbed the harmony of the moral universe, it may not be amiss, at this, our present stand-point, to warn all, and especially the young, against its seductive and soul-damning influences. For

> "Of all the causes which conspire to blind,
> Man's erring judgment, and misguide the mind,
> What the weak head with strongest bias rules,
> Is pride, the never-failing vice of fools."

That any man born of a woman can be proud; that such an one can be lifted up with vanity at the mercy-seat, or anywhere else, might, indeed, seem to be incredible did we not know the fact. But, alas! its world-wide existence is only too painfully evident. It is seen every-where; it is seen in the church; it is seen in the costly trinkets of many who profess to be adorned with the more precious orna

ments of an humble, meek, and gentle spirit; it is seen in their extremely fashionable and costly attire; it is seen in the vain and ostentatious air with which they enter the house of God; it is seen in the little unbecoming artifices by which they endeavor to attract attention to themselves during the public services, and by which they are but too successful in drawing away the minds and the hearts of the unconverted from the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; it is seen in their refusal to participate in the vocal melodies of the sanctuary, unless every strain is made to harmonize with their own exquisite sense of the latest and most fashionable style of church music; it is seen in their unbecoming slothfulness and indifference during the devotional exercises of the congregation; and it is seen in the wanton looks and in the hellish laugh that are sometimes witnessed in the very act of celebrating our Savior's dying love for a poor, miserable, perishing world!

How, then, can such persons, without an entire change of heart, approach God acceptably, so long as it is written, "God resisteth the

proud; but he giveth grace unto the humble?"* This humility is not a mere momentary accident of Christian character. It is not like a garment that may be put on, or that may be laid aside to suit the occasion. It must be a habit of mind, manifesting itself as a permanent characteristic of the heart and of the life of its possessor, or it is not worth a farthing.

No wonder, then, that so few prayers are now heard and answered. No wonder that the heavens over our heads so often appear like brass; and that the earth beneath our feet appears like iron. Before the windows of heaven can be opened, and the blessings of God poured down copiously upon us from on high, we must become more like little children; we must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God; we must see that without his sustaining grace, we are only "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."† "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."‡

2. We should pray with a forgiving spirit.

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* James iv: 6. † Rev. iii: 17. ‡ Luke xiv: 11.

"For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." *

It is to be feared that this plain, absolute, and unchangeable law of the kingdom of heaven is very often violated in all the ranks of modern Christendom. How many are now nominally associated in the same congregation, but who, nevertheless, refuse even to speak to each other; the pride of whose heart will not allow them to treat each other with even the common courtesies of life! Does it become such to say, "Forgive us our debts *as we forgive our debtors?*" †

Let all such, then, carefully ponder what Christ has said in the last section of the eighteenth chapter of Matthew; and let them remember that God will do even so to every man who does not, *from his heart*, forgive the trespasses of his brother.

3. Our prayers should be expressed both with brevity and simplicity. This follows as an obvious consequence from my last remark If God is in heaven and we upon earth, it is

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* Matt. vi: 15 † Matt. vi: 12.

surely becoming that our words be few, simple, and well-ordered before him.* And hence, in that prayer which Christ gave his disciples under the Jewish economy, and which, in manner, is still worthy of our imitation, there is nothing like that vain, pompous, and ostentatious display of learning and eloquence which has become so prominent in the worship of modern Christendom. Many pastors and teachers now seem to be more ambitious to imitate, in their prayers, the customs of the heathen, who think they will be heard for their much speaking, than to follow the example of our blessed Savior.

This practice is not only sinful in itself, but it is also attended with some very bad consequences. It begets and fosters in both the teacher and the taught a spirit of pride; and it has, moreover, a direct tendency to discourage the unlearned from all participation in the public or social prayers of the church. It presents to the people a false standard, a standard which they can no more imitate

* Eccl. v: 2.

than they can imitate the logic of a Paul or the eloquence of an Apollos. And hence they are ashamed to pray in public; and the spirit of prayer being stifled, it is to be feared that many of them soon forget to pray even in private.

But who can not imitate the brevity and the simplicity of the model given by our adorable Redeemer? Who can not say, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."* Or, if this be too much, who can not at least exclaim, with the poor publican, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*"† This is the eloquence of the heart. This is the style of prayer that moves mountains, and that puts to flight all the armies of the aliens. And this all may very easily imitate, whether in

* Matt. vi: 9–13. † Luke xviii: 13.

their closets, in their families, or in the public assembly of the saints.

4. We should pray in an humble and becoming attitude. The sitting posture is exceedingly unbecoming. It ordinarily indicates a want of reverence and respect that would not be tolerated in the court of any earthly prince, king, or potentate. A mere hint, then, to those who are *at ease* in Zion, will, we hope, be sufficient on this subject.

The attitude of standing is certainly much more respectful, as well as more favorable for the exercise and cultivation of the powers and susceptibilities of the soul. It has, moreover, been tolerated, if, indeed, it has not been sanctioned and commended, by Jehovah himself, in the case of many pious and God-fearing men. Abraham *stood* before the Lord while he made supplications for the cities of the plain.* In his intercessory prayer, Solomon first kneeled, and then rose and blessed the people with continued prayers and supplications.† The children of Israel, too, after their return from

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* Gen. xviii: 22. † 1 Kings viii: 54–61.

Babylon and the discovery of the book of the law, "assembled with fastings, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and *stood* and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers."*

But the most natural and becoming position for the humble, confessing penitent before a throne of grace, is unquestionably the kneeling posture. And, hence, it is that which is most frequently mentioned in both the Old and the New Testament. Indeed, so far as we know, this was the exclusive practice of the primitive Christian church; and, therefore, it is still the most becoming in all those who profess to take the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible as the rule of their faith and practice. The following references will suffice for illustration: 1 Kings viii: 54; 2 Chron. vi: 13; Psa. xcv: 6; Dan. vi: 10; Matt. xvii: 14; Mark i: 40; also x: 17; Luke xxii: 41; Acts vii: 60; ix: 40; xx: 36; xxi: 5; Rom. xi: 4; Eph. iii: 14; Phil. ii: 10.

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* Neh. ix: 1, 2.

We know that there is some force in the objection, so often alleged, that many of our meeting-houses are kept so disgustingly filthy as to make it unpleasant and disagreeable for any one to kneel. This is certainly a very good reason why the sanctuary should be cleansed. There is no virtue in filth, whether it be found in the house of God or in any other place. But if Paul and his Syrian brethren could kneel down on the shore of the Mediterranean, it is presumable that all whose hearts are equally humble can find a place to bow the knee even in the most filthy of our modern meeting-houses. Or, if this should be thought inconsistent with our fine, costly, and fashionable apparel, and the churches *can not* be cleansed, then I would respectfully suggest the propriety of changing somewhat the style of our dress. A little less silk and a little more sackcloth in the house of God would, we apprehend, detract not one iota from our own spiritual comfort.

5. All our prayers must be offered up *through Christ, as the great and only mediator of the New Covenant.* This is one of the

gracious and peculiar privileges belonging to the subjects of the Messiah's reign. No patriarch or Jew ever prayed thus. Nor did Christ ever teach his disciples to ask any thing in his name, until he was about to leave them. "Hitherto," said he, a short time before his crucifixion, "ye have asked nothing in my name." *

But since the time of his coronation; since all authority in heaven and on earth was committed to him, it is the decree of Jehovah that all petitions shall be presented in the name of Jesus; and that all men shall honor the Son even as they also honor the Father. And hence, says Paul to the Colossians, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." †

Having, then, dear brethren, "a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest who can not be touched with the feeling of our

* John xvi: 24. † Col. iii: 17.

infirmities; but was, in all points, tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

* Heb. iv: 14–16.

COMMUNINGS

IN THE

SANCTUARY.

By R. RICHARDSON.

"O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy Holy Hill, and to thy Tabernacles."—Ps. XLIII, 3.

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TO

The Pure in Heart,

THE FOLLOWING MEDITATIONS,

DESIGNED TO AID DEVOTIONAL FEELING

AND PROMOTE LOVE TO CHRIST,

ARE HUMBLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

COMMUNINGS

IN THE

SANCTUARY.

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COMMUNINGS

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I.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!"

WHEN the Patriarch arose from his dreamy slumbers in the field of Luz, he exclaimed, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!" How many thus enter into the sanctuary of God, without any realizing sense of the divine presence! How many, alas, from that sleep of error never waken! Yet the Lord is in his holy temple, and will there reveal himself to his people; even to the seed of Israel, his servant—the children of Jacob, his chosen.

How fitting that we should enter into his gates

with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise! How proper that we should here repress each worldly thought, and yield our hearts up to those sacred communings in which Faith lifts a ladder to the skies, that angels may descend to earth, and God himself confirm his promises of grace!

"Communion sweet! Communion large and high!"

Surely, with the lonely wanderer of Bethel, we may exclaim: How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!

Here, indeed, we have no earthly holy place, framed and adorned by human hands; no inner temple veiled in mysterious sanctity; no golden emblems of the regalia of heaven; no Shechinah beaming forth from between the cherubims; but we have the assembly of saints; the congregation of the Lord; the body of Christ animated by his Spirit; the ordinances of divine service revealing, publishing, commemorating the love of God to men; the holy privilege of drawing near to God in concert with those who have obtained like precious faith with us; the unveiled spiritual

glories of the reign of heaven; the light of life; the joys of love divine. Return, then, unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

In the deep stillness of the heart let every anxious care be hushed, and cheerful Hope diffuse her grateful balm. Let the sorrows of the mind be banished from this place, for the Being in whose presence we appear is the God of consolation and of hope. To him we bring no bleeding victim from the flock, and present no ineffectual oblations upon a blazing altar, but we offer the incense of praise; the grateful homage of the affections; the deep devotion of the soul; the living sacrifice of the body, acceptable through the precious blood of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, and emancipates us from the bondage of fear and sorrow.

With what heart-felt assurance, then, we should make his sheltering wings our refuge! With what reverential joy we should approach the sacred memorials of his grace here presented before us, and "banquet on his love's repast." Behold these emblems! They speak to the heart. They

tell of God's love—the love of Him from whom all love proceeds. They tell of sorrows borne for us—of humiliation, pain, and death. Let us consider them. We come to Jesus, and he meets us here—

> "The King himself draws near
> To feast his saints to-day."

In the awful mysteries of life and death we hold communion. With the spiritual unseen we live and move. Into the dwelling of the Most High we enter to take the cup of salvation—to pay our vows in the presence of his people. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer!

II.

"I was glad when they said unto me: Let us go into the house of the Lord."—PSALM cxxii: 1.

IT is indeed in the assembly of the saints that gladness and rejoicing should fill the heart. It is here that we are, in an especial manner, permitted to draw near to Him that is the source of every pure and blissful emotion. In his presence there can be no sorrow, for there all tears are wiped away, and there are "pleasures forevermore." In the contemplation of his glory, which also he permits us to enjoy; in the ever-opening mysteries of redeeming love; in the radiance of that divine illumination which penetrates the moral and intellectual powers, and reveals the past, the present, and the future, what unfailing sources of happiness are found!

And how delightful the reflection that this hap-

piness can never end; that Infinity itself is our treasury of joy, in which are stored "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" that new discoveries await us, which Fancy's bright imaginings but dimly sketch, and that these shall give place to hopes more radiant, and a fruition still more glorious! It is thus that the unknown may forever continue to gratify our love of knowledge, and the untold mysteries of the universe augment that blissful experience which serves but to enlarge the capacity for enjoyment.

How strangely attractive indeed, to us, are the mysteries by which we are encompassed! How wisely arranged is our progress, that new scenes continually open to our view and lead us onward to a better future! How appropriate here the reflections of Chateaubriand, that all 'the beauty, sweetness, and grandeur of life reside in its mysteries; and that no condition can be more deplorable than that of a man who can learn no more! What delight continually fills the heart of youth which knows as yet so little! What satiety depresses the feelings of age to which life's changes have been all revealed! How fortunate

for the latter, when the secrets of life are ending, those of eternity commence!

'The feelings of love and modesty, of friendship and gratitude, are involved in obscurity; yet how strongly do they move the heart! The angelic virtue of charity loves to withdraw itself from all regards, as though to conceal its celestial origin. The pleasures of thought, also, are in those sciences which always leave something to be discovered, and fix our regards upon a perspective which is never to terminate.

'If, in the bustling city, we survey a modern monument, whose origin or purpose is known, it excites no attention; but, if we meet upon a desert shore a broken column or mutilated statue, worn by the lapse of ages, its pedestal covered with unknown characters, how interesting a subject of meditation it presents to the mind! Every thing is concealed, every thing is hidden in the universe. Man himself is the greatest mystery of the whole. Whence comes the spark which we call existence, and in what obscurity is it to be extinguished? Our birth and death are placed by the Eternal, like two veiled phantoms,

at the two extremities of our career. The one produces the inconceivable gift of life—mysterious amidst its light; the other quenches that brilliant spark in the obscurity of its own impenetrable darkness.

It is not surprising that men should have availed themselves of the influence of mystery upon the human mind, to impose upon it the chains of superstition. An affected sanctity, a claim of angelic visions, or of a miraculous power to heal, secure at once the wonder and submission of the throng. The strange accents of the unknown language of the mass; the awful mystery of transubstantiation; the solemn ceremonies of a worship imperfectly understood, and rendered still more imposing by symbolic images, and mysterious scrolls dimly perceived in the empurpled light of stained and Gothic windows, or through the smoke of fragrant incense: these are all calculated to take hold of the imagination and enchain the soul.

Surely, however, it is not incongruous with the *real* mysteries of religion, to throw around them those pleasing shades and grateful harmonies

which so well display their nature and extend their power. The ancient tabernacle was shrouded in curtains; and, while the gorgeous temple shone in all the elegance of architecture, it had its deep recesses, its secret chambers, and its veiled mysterious sanctuary. Even the presence of the Deity was indicated by the *cloud* that filled these sacred abodes. For He who conceals himself in "light that no man can approach," "makes darkness also his secret place—his pavilion round about him dark waters and thick clouds of the skies." And it is but a just conformity to the fitness of things, and an efficient aid to devotional feeling and the solemnity of public worship, to exclude at least the glaring brilliancy of day from the house of prayer. For, however well suited may be the dazzling beams of day to the town-hall or the market, where men transact the business of this world, the painful glare transmitted by uncurtained windows, revealing the naked walls, the rude benches, the rough table, and the clumsy rostrum sometimes met with in our houses of worship, seems illy to comport with the circumstances of the place and the solemnities of

religion. Though we may indeed dispense with the "long-drawn aisle and fretted vault," the clustered pillars, the gorgeous tapestry, the carving and the gilding which merely gratify a love of worldly splendor, surely a decent respect for the service of the house of God should induce a careful attention to every means calculated to favor devotional feeling, and sanctify those rites whose mysterious import claims the undivided attention of the soul!

How often may we justly impute to the absence of such aids, that want of reverence which is so conspicuous! How often are those wandering thoughts, those restless glances, those distracted feelings which are so readily marked, occasioned by those unpropitious arrangements by which the things and thoughts of the world are continually pressed upon the attention! In vain would heaven assist our faith by the sacred symbols of divine love, and allure the heart to dwell upon spiritual joys, when the glare and bustle of every-day life are permitted to intrude themselves into the house of the worshiping assembly.

It is here that every thing should promote that

solemn stillness and that reverential awe, which prepare the heart for communion with God and a better appreciation of the deep mysteries of his grace. It is in the contemplation of these that the soul reaches forward into an unseen eternity, and anticipates the day when, freed from the trammels of mortality, it shall be free to explore those wonders now so imperfectly perceived and understood. It is in making new discoveries in the depths of divine wisdom, and in gaining clearer insight into his unsearchable judgments, that the Christian realizes the blissful privileges he enjoys. Here, then, may the boldest fancy tempt its most adventurous flight, and the mind expand its noblest powers, and the pious heart experience its purest and holiest emotions. For there are no boundaries to the ocean of divine love! There are no limits to the riches of the divine wisdom! There are no fears that man shall ever find an end, or weep that he can know, and wonder, and enjoy no more. "Praise thou the Lord, O my soul!" "Sing unto the Lord a new song and his praise, in the congregation of saints." "Praise God

in his sanctuary, praise him in the firmament of his power! Praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness! Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord!"

III.

"I will abide in thy tabernacle forever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings."—PSALM lxi: 4.

HOW truly incomprehensible and beyond comparison is the love of God for man! Inscrutable as his ways, unsearchable as his judgments, deep as the exhaustless mines of his wisdom and knowledge, his love but partakes of the infinitude of his nature and the ineffable glory of his perfections. How, then, can we hope to fathom its depths, to estimate its value, or to realize its power! Were we to add together all the emotions of love in all human hearts; every feeling of affection; every sentiment of kindness; every form of attachment—parental, filial, fraternal, social, the love of the espoused, the love of lovers—all would fail to express, or even typify, the love of God. Of all these kind and

affectionate emotions, these fountains of earth's joys, without which this world would be a dreary waste, God is himself the author. For God is love in its abstract and unoriginated essence; and, since love can proceed from God alone, these are but the faint emanations, but the scattering rays of that divine love which first created and now redeems. And oh! how weak our noblest effort; how cold our warmest thought; how faint our most vivid conceptions, when contrasted with this love!

Yet we are here assembled in presence of these sacred emblems to consider it in the most wonderful of all its manifestations. "In this was love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Earth's highest evidence of love is, that a man should die for his friends. To heaven belongs the love that brought Christ to die for his enemies. Earth can supply no comparison by which it may be illustrated, and the human soul possesses no powers by which it may be fully appreciated. He forsook those realms of joy where the love of God forever reigns; he abandoned

the honors and wealth of heaven to assume our nature; to take the position of a servant; to become a pauper, an outcast, a houseless wanderer! He came to endure fatigue, and hunger, and temptation; to encounter contumely, ridicule, and scorn; to receive hatred for instruction, and ingratitude for kindness; to be "despised and rejected of men;" to be emphatically "a man of sorrows," and one who was familiar with grief; and finally, in all his innocence and unresisting gentleness, to be made to suffer the ignominious death of the cross—reviled even in his agonies, and not only by the cruel throng, but by the faltering tongues of dying robbers, copartners in shame and suffering; denounced by the vilest of men; and (oh, insupportable anguish!) while thus cut off from life as unfit for earth, forsaken by the Deity as unfit for heaven! Yet he suffered not for himself; he was not "stricken or smitten of God," or "afflicted" for his own offenses. For surely it was our griefs he bore; it was our sorrows that he carried. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities. It was the

chastisement of our peace that was upon him; it was by his stripes that we are healed!

Such are the wonderful facts which we are called upon to contemplate as the exemplification of the love of God. And certainly it is in the life and death of Jesus that we can best consider that love, and make the nighest approach to its apprehension. As Immanuel, he has brought God near to us; as the express image of the Father, he has truly revealed Him; as God manifested in the flesh, he is love impersonated. In all his acts we observe the power of this divine love; we study it in all his words; we recognize it in all the social intercourse, in all the familiar incidents of his life, and in all the affecting associations and fearful agonies of his death.

How proper that the Deity should desire this love to be reciprocated. Every emotion loves to reproduce itself, and to find a kindred sympathy in the bosom of another. It is thus extended, exalted, and perfected in those of corresponding susceptibilities, and attains its legitimate objects. It is from man, who is created in the image of God, that God himself desires reciprocal love!

And if poignant the sting of anguish experienced when earth's weak love is unrequited, what must be the keenness of the sense of ingratitude when the love of heaven is rejected with disdain— A love of whose intensity we can form no adequate conception— A love that pervades the universe; that includes all within its fond embrace, and longs to impart its own ineffable joys to all who will receive them! Oh! may not even the angelic nature here feel a sympathetic pang? May not the Son of God here shed bitter tears of anguish, as erst on Olivet?

But, alas! how shall man return a love of which he can not even adequately conceive? It is high as heaven; it is vast as the universe! How can he attain to it? how can he compass it? Poor, indeed, must be his offering of a heart debased by the world and Satan, when all its purest and noblest feelings of undivided affection would bear no proportion to the love of God. But it is the nature of love never to be mercenary. It seeks not compensation, it requires not equal measure, it demands not more than can be given. A gentle word may requite a kind act; a smile of

affection, the most precious favor. Man may not love as God loves, who is infinite in love as in wisdom and in power; but he may love as man can love, who is so limited and feeble in all his capacities. And when he loves the Lord with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, he renders the least return that may be offered, and the greatest that can be demanded.

Nor is man left to form, by imagination, faint images of the Deity on whom his affections are to rest. Jesus is the living image of the invisible God, and his manifestation in the flesh renders possible that personality of attachment, that individualization of love so apposite and congenial to our nature. Nay, we are not even left alone with the sweet remembrances of the personal advent of the Lord Messiah, gleaned from sacred and ancient records; but as though to give scope and expression to this love, and quicken it by the active energies of life, he supplies a present, living, coequal, and consentient object, and bids us prove our regard for him by our love for one another. "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another: as I have loved

you, that ye also love one another." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Transcendent thought, that man can become a temple for the Deity! That the glorious Being, of whom our unequal powers can form no adequate conception, and whose glory fills both earth and heaven, can yet find a dwelling place in the human heart! Inscrutable and sublime mystery, that "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him!" "Yet hereby do we know that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." And oh! how joyful the reflection, that however weak our powers, however imperfect our efforts, the Divine Comforter can shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, enlarge our capacities, transform all our feeble nature, render us partakers of the divine fullness, and sharers in the everlasting joys and effulgent glory of the divine presence!

IV.

"Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth."—PSALM lxxi: 20.

IT appears, at first view, somewhat strange that Christianity, which brings life and immortality to light and opens to Faith the transcendent glories of the spiritual world, should, nevertheless, have here assembled its votaries to present to their contemplation the emblems of death and sorrow. It would seem as though its far-seeing gaze were suddenly obstructed, and its distant hopes obscured; or that all its movements and influences were reversed, and its noblest purposes altered; so that now its paths, like those of earthly glory, "lead but to the grave." Nor is it a less singular thought that death should become, under any circumstances, a subject of commemoration:—

Strange, that the very consummation of human woes and the chief object of human fears could be made a matter of voluntary contemplation—a matter to be celebrated, a source of happiness and hope; and, stranger still, that we should have met to celebrate the death, not of an enemy, but of our best and truest friend!

But it is in the sanctuary of God that the enigmas, both of life and death, are solved; that the mysteries of religion and of humanity are revealed. It is here that truths concentrate; that extremes meet, and the first and the last, the beginning and the end, are one. It is here that He, who, in the beginning, brought light out of darkness, educes good from evil, joy from sorrow, life from death, and glory from dishonor. It is here that we begin truly to realize that we dwell amidst the antagonisms of natural and spiritual contrarieties, and that an omnipotent and omniscient Friend has wisely ordained our lot, that we might become acquainted with opposite and contrary affections, and learn by experience how immeasurable the height of that supreme love which holds the nice balance of our destiny, and

how unfathomable the depths of that divine wisdom which, from the very lowest abyss of misery and depression, builds up the loftiest abode of joy.

"Except you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man," says Jesus, "you have no life in yourselves." This is but the expression of the law of our spiritual being. "This is the record, that the Father has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." If *Jesus* had not died we could not have lived; for it is only through him who died for us that we can live to God. It is only by partaking of that bread which came down from heaven, and which was given for the life of the world, that we can live forever.

How precious the life which this spiritual food imparts! How just and striking the relation between this life and the food by which it is sustained! As the life must correspond with that by which it is maintained, celestial life can be nourished only by the bread of heaven. Food that is itself corruptible can maintain only a perishable life. "Therefore," said our Lord, "labor not

for the meat that perisheth." "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert," replied the Jews, "as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." "Nay," replied Jesus, "I say to you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven." That manna was corruptible, for, if kept, it bred worms and perished; it could sustain, therefore, but a perishable life. It was evanescent, and disappeared before the rising sun; it was fitted, therefore, only to support a life which, like a "vapor, appeareth but for a little time and then vanishes away." "Your fathers," he therefore added, "did eat manna in the desert and *are dead.*"

But the food by which spiritual life is sustained is imperishable. "I am that bread of life," said the Redeemer. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Thus it is "living," incorruptible food alone that can impart true life and incor-

ruptibility. And oh! how striking the literal fact which perfects the agreement of these truths, that when our Lord gave his flesh for the life of the world, that "living food" saw no *corruption!* For he was the "true bread from heaven;" the celestial manna; the "bread of God which came from heaven to give life to the world." It was not possible that he should be held by death in the bondage of the grave. God would not leave his soul in Hades, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption. The food of spiritual life must be imperishable as that life, and a just correspondence must obtain between the figurative and the real; the type and the anti-type: the fact and the doctrine which the fact reveals.

How important, then, the solemn declaration: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in yourselves!"*

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*This passage is incorrectly rendered in the common version, "Ye have no life in you." The true sense is thus quite lost. For, to say that any one "has life *in him*," is a very different proposition from this: that "he has life *in himself*." The former denotes merely the possession of life;

How important to realize that there is this necessary connection between life and its food, and that as mortality and corruption depend upon food that is itself perishable, so eternal life is equally dependent upon that food which endures forever. Well, therefore, did our Savior say: "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him." How happy he who can truly realize by

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the latter implies not only this, but that the life possessed is an essential part of the nature of the person of whom it is affirmed. It is precisely the same expression in the original here as in verse 26 of the preceding chapter (John v), where it is said: "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Life is thus declared to be an essential attribute of the Divine nature, and it becomes likewise an essential attribute of all who become partakers of that Divine nature through Christ. Hence, it is affirmed of the just that "they *can not die any more*," being made equal in this respect to angels.

experience these precious spiritual truths! How blissful the assurance that, in becoming partakers of Christ, we share that divine nature in which life is inherent! How wonderful the thought that we who are but, as it were, the creatures of yesterday, may lay hold of the very attribute of the Deity, and be invested with imperishable life and joy! And how inscrutable the wisdom, power, and goodness which can thus cause the natural to give place to the spiritual; which can compel weakness to reveal power, and death itself to yield us life!

V.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."—PSALM xci: 1.

THERE is a religion of the imagination, as there is a religion of the intellect or of the heart; for God may be an object of fancy, as well as of reason or of love. Alas! how many are the gifted souls who dream away the trial-time of life in vain illusions, unawakened to the realities of true devotion. And how earnestly they seek to prolong those visions of ideal beauty, and dwell within those palaces of enchantment which have arisen at their pleasure!

To them this universe is but as a fairy mansion, whose cerulean dome is studded with sparkling gems, and sustained by mountain columns whose capitals are brilliant glaciers of magnificent pro-

portions, and carved with more than Corinthian elegance. To them the sun shines forth through the stained windows of the east, only to sparkle in the dew-drops, or to paint the flowers, or to relieve with light and shade the imagery of earth and heaven; and he sinks into the golden aërial seas of the west amidst clustered islands, glowing with the tints of the ruby and the amethyst, the fancied residence of perpetual delight. The orbs of the firmament are, to them, the lamps which night suspends to the lofty vault to cast a silvery radiance over field, and stream, and forest, and increase enjoyment by the charms of variety and the mysterious wonders of her still and shadowy hours. The whole earth, indeed, to them, is but a magnificent suite of apartments carpeted with verdure, or paved with marble, and embellished with living pictures. In the vast halls and spacious courts of their abode the ear is soothed with the melody of birds, and the senses lulled by the murmur of gushing fountains and the sweet odor of flowers, borne on the wings of gentle zephyrs. In its secret cabinets are treasures inexhaustible of gold, and silver, and

precious stones. Its pleasure grounds, its gardens, its groves, its rivers, and lakes, and oceans, filled with the various tribes of animated nature, are created to be admired, and are but varied orders and forms of beauty. In a word, the world, with all that it contains, is, to them, but an exhibition of glory and beauty—an emanation from the Beautiful, which is their deity and their IDOL. To this alone they offer the incense of their hearts; to this alone they build their altars, not only in the fair fields of Nature, but in the temples of Art. The sculptor, the painter, the musician, the architect, the poet, and the orator are the true priests of their religion; praise is their only oblation, and pleasure their sole pursuit.

How generally are these the dreams of youth! How often, too, are they the only realities of manhood! How many there are who live merely to cull earth's fading flowers! How many there are who worship at no other shrine than that of an ideal perfection of beauty—a sensual image—a worldly sanctuary—an earthly Zion, out of which the true Jehovah has never shone! With

them a refined taste is the true standard of piety, and an admiration of the works of the Creator, true devotion. Nor is their discernment of moral beauty less acute or accurate than their perception of the charms of Nature. They contemplate with delight its noble examples; they honor and admire magnanimity and courage, patience and fortitude, benevolence and mercy, and all the moral virtues; but, unfortunately, as they commit the error of thinking piety to consist in a proper reverence for the beautiful in the works of God, so they imagine that, in morals, to honor virtue is to possess it, and that to admire morality is to practice it.

A thousand charms, however, cluster around this religion of the fancy, as compared with the barren and undecorated religion of the intellect. Here, calm Philosophy seeks to analyze the organisms of the spiritual system, or prying Curiosity would dissect those outward forms from which all life and beauty have departed. Here, minute distinctions, remote discoveries, ingenious speculations, are the grand essentials of both piety and morals. And, while the religion of the fancy

would revel in the sunlight which imparts its splendors to earth, and delight to range amidst the charms of a terrestrial home, the religion of the intellect would soar aloft to seek the source of day, and, in the vain attempt to gain superior knowledge, become lost beyond earth's limits in outer darkness and perpetual winter. It is this religion which inspires that spiritual pride which dogmatizes in matters of opinion, and that intolerant bigotry which persecutes in matters of faith. It is this religion which infuses into men the lust of power, and coolly calculates the profits of oppression. Before its tribunal the rights of conscience are invalid and the pleadings of the heart are disregarded, for its laws are the speculations of opinionism, and the decisions of its judges are the cold abstractions of a perverted reason. In a word, under its domination to *think* right is to *do* right, and to worship *reason* is to worship GOD.

But, oh! that "Lamb as it had been slain"—that form that was "marred"—that loving heart that was "pierced"—these sacred memorials of that divine love now spread before us! Surely, it is not *here* that such religions as these can tri-

umph. It is not in the sanctuary of God that we shall either bow in the chambers of imagery or yield to the idolatry of reason. How poor, and weak, and valueless do they appear when the heart feels the love of God, and the soul rejoices in the Beloved! How evanescent now the glories with which Fancy may deck her day-dreams! How visionary and false here are Reason's partial revelations of the Infinite! "It is Christ that died; yea, rather that hath risen again!" "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." Before the cross of Jesus the magnificence of earth is vanity, and the power of intellect but pride. And oh! how much have they to unlearn, who have been taught in these schools of error, before they can realize that God's grace is glory, that his foolishness is wiser than men, and his weakness, superior strength!

But oh! my soul, rejoice thou in the Lord and be joyful in the God of thy salvation! The Lord is "a sun and a shield," a strong tower of defense to them that trust him. He crowneth thee "with mercy and loving kindness," and satisfieth thee

"with good things." He leadeth thee by the "still waters" in the "green pastures" where he feeds his flock. "He guideth thee in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." How happy they who are permitted to dwell in the courts of the Lord, and to behold his beauty as he appeareth in the sanctuary! Here shines forever the true lamp of wisdom; here is continually provided the bread of life; here ascends the most acceptable incense; and, behind the veil of outward symbols, we are admitted to bow before the spiritual mercy-seat, overshadowed by the wings of cherubim and the radiant glory of the divine presence. For this is the house of God, the "greater and more perfect tabernacle" which the Lord himself has erected for his own abode. It is here he would receive the grateful homage of the heart. It is here that he will meet with those who love him and hope in his mercy.

And it is here that the deceitful visions of Fancy must be exchanged for the sacred promises of Christian Hope, and that Reason must be subjected to the mysteries of Revelation. And oh! how gainful is that exchange! how blissful

that subjection! For Christian Hope admits to scenes more glorious than unaided Fancy ever sketched, and the mysteries of Faith are more sublime than those of Reason. And it is in the unsearchable riches of Christ; in the infinitude of the Divine perfections, the depths of his wisdom, the greatness of his power, the wonders of his redeeming love, that all the faculties of our nature may find their noblest exercise and most illimitable freedom. Here Fancy may range in fields of delight or rest in bowers of Eden, for Hope and Joy shall lead her to the realms of eternal glory, and where the perfection of beauty shall be enjoyed forever. Here Reason may be borne on wings of Faith to know and to admire the mysteries of the universe, while unfailing Love, enthroning the Deity in the heart, consecrates every pursuit, sanctifies every emotion, refines every enjoyment, and brings the whole man, in all the departments of his nature, under the blissful influences of true religion.

VI.

"I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy, and, in thy fear, will I worship toward thy holy temple."—PSALM v: 7.

THE subjects to which our attention is here invited are of the highest importance. Religion does not occupy herself with trifles, or present to our consideration the light matters of a passing hour or of a fleeting fancy. Ah! no. Her themes are serious, and they are urged upon us with a solemn earnestness appropriate to their character. We come not to the house of God to gaze upon a display of beauty or of finery, to listen to the voice of earthly pleasure, or dwell upon the idle vanities of the world. Far different objects meet here the eye of faith, far different is the voice that here salutes the listening ear, far different are the themes that here engross the

soul. It is with life and with death we come to hold communion, and, amidst the solemn darkness and awful secrets of the grave, to find the light and the revelations of eternity. Surely, that which thus regards the deepest interests must be itself important; that which thus deals alone with realities must itself be real; that which allies itself equally to the dreary desolations of the grave—our mortal fears, and to our eternal hopes—the smiling joys of life and light and love, must claim our earnest and sincere regard. How serious should be our thoughts of life! how solemn our meditations upon the mysteries of our being! how impressive our consciousness that we are raised up from the dust to move amid "this breathing world," to wrestle with its giant forms of evil, to struggle with the ever-watchful destroyer, and to contend for life even unto death! How abiding should be the conviction that we are inhabitants of two worlds and partakers of two natures—associated as well with the lowest form of animal existence as with the loftiest development of spiritual being; that there are ties which bind us both to earth and heaven, the

seen and the unseen, the temporal and the eternal! How earnest should be our efforts to maintain our relations with life, and especially with that "eternal life which was with the Father" and was "manifested" to the world!

Who can contemplate, unmoved, the dissolution of this mortal nature; the cessation of the life-pulse that sends the vital current through the frame; the breaking up of those conscious springs of existence which we feel within us! How solemn and how sad those moments when we approach the last hour of life, even though our pains may be soothed by the kind hand of affection and our hearts comforted by the tender voice of sympathy, or consoled by the sweet assurances of forgiveness and sustained by the cheering promises of hope. How dreadful, then, must have been the death which we now commemorate—the death of our Redeemer! Those who had attended him in life "stood afar off," and the sins of a world oppressed his soul with deadly anguish. By the mouth of the Prophet he exclaims: "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some one

to take pity, but there were none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat, and, in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink." "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are sundered. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have encompassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

The crucifixion of Christ was the greatest crime ever committed by men. He died BY sin as well as *for* sin. Well did he say, that 'the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world should be required of that generation,' for his death was the consummation of all their crimes. It is, indeed, often hard to realize that human beings could be guilty of so cruel an enormity; that they could so harm the harmless, and pursue with such cruel animosity that

good and gentle One. It seems so contrary to the common occurrences of life and to the common sympathies of humanity, which will be awakened in behalf of even the most atrocious criminal who is led along to execution, that we pause for a moment, in astonishment and wonder, to inquire, How can these things be? But again, when we reflect upon the power of Satan to inspire the human heart with his own malignity; when we remember what reason he had to seek the destruction of Jesus, who had resisted all his temptations, invaded his own dominions, and dispossessed his legionary tormentors of their prey, we can comprehend the fact and explain the enigma. And when we refer to the persecutions of the martyrs, and to the inconceivable malignity evinced against the true followers of Jesus on his account, we see but the agency of the same mighty power of darkness and of death. With how much bitter animosity and hatred has he inspired even the unbeliever, who, from his own principles, should have been but an indifferent spectator of religious controversies and sectarian crimes! "Let us crush the wretch!" exclaims Voltaire, the prince of

infidels; and have not his followers, in our day, been known with dying lips to curse the name of Jesus? Here we have, so to speak, our own experience to corroborate that wondrous tale of sorrow related by the evangelists, to show that it is possible for men thus to hate, with such deadly and bitter hatred, one who never harmed them, but who, on the contrary, bestowed upon them the most precious favors. Yes, they hate him now as they hated him then, "*without a cause.*" They would even now "crush" or crucify him, and still vainly be called upon to answer the inquiry which Pilate propounded to his murderers: "Why, what evil hath he done?"

Who can approach, without trembling, to look in upon a soul thus filled with malignity? Who can, without a shudder, gaze into that dark abyss of wickedness into which human nature may thus be plunged? Who can duly estimate the capacities of men for crime, when the dark Spirit of Evil himself undertakes to develop them? Yet such are the scenes we are called upon to witness, such are the subjects we are here invited to consider, where Christ crucified is placed before us and the

scenes of Calvary are brought to our remembrance. From this position we may survey that cruel spectacle, and hear the mockery and the shouts of the infuriate crowd. They offer to him that bitter (*chole*), that narcotic bitter, in sour wine, which the Romans, to add the semblance of mercy to cruelty, were wont to give the condemned before their crucifixion to deaden their sensibility to pain; but when he tastes thereof he will not drink it. No. It is the cup which the Father hath given him that he will drink. It is the punishment due to our sins that he will endure without mitigation or alleviation. Behold him in those mortal agonies, and hear even his fellow-sufferers revile him, and see the disciples whom he had so fondly loved and so highly honored forsake him in the hour of his calamity. But hearken to those piteous accents—that sole complaint which he can be made to utter: "My God, my God, why hast THOU forsaken me?" The mortal pangs of expiring nature he can bear without a murmur, and endure that he should be abandoned by his friends, but not that God should also forsake him. He can suffer the death of the body

with unshrinking fortitude, but not that his soul should be separated from God, the source of being and of blessedness. Who can depict the expression of agony which rests upon that gentle countenance, when he is thus excluded from both worlds and left, for one dreadful moment, *alone with human crimes!* Upon that pure and innocent nature, how heavily presses that sinful load! Before his sacred soul appear, in horrid array, the unnumbered transgressions of the whole world, from that of Eden—the murder of Abel—the crimes of Manasseh—the blood of Zechariah—the cruelty of his own destroyers—the persecutions of his martyrs—the revolting detail of all the forms of human guilt now known or yet to be. And are not our sins, too, there, while cruel lips mock that cry of agony and say: Let us see if Elijah will come to save him? and while cruel hands present him vinegar to drink? Surely, he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. For it pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief, to make his soul an

offering for sin, and he hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.

For this "he hath trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him." For this he is "despised and rejected of men." For this "he is taken away by distress and judgment," and "cut off out of the land of the living" in the morning of life. Who now shall give an account of his race? "Who shall declare his generation?" What name or memorial hath he left in Israel? Is there not one to mourn for him? not one to bear his name to future ages? Yes, says the Spirit, it is even now, when his soul is made an offering for sin, that "he shall see his seed," that he "shall prolong his days," and that "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." He shall rejoice in a numerous posterity that God shall give him—the children of faith and love, the children of the resurrection, of light and life. For "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with transgressors,

and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Through this offering God can be just in justifying the ungodly. Through his death God has brought to light incorruptibility and life, and the greatest crime ever committed by man has been made to us the richest blessing. 'T was Satan's doing to instigate men to slay him; 't was the Lord's doing to destroy, through his death, him that had the power of death, and to deliver human souls from bondage. Let the earth rejoice and break forth into singing, for the grave shall not devour forever, nor continue to rob us of our joys. Death itself is made to bring forth life, and the tomb becomes the chrysalis of immortality!

And shall not we, then, who have known the love of God, approach with reverence this sublime mystery, to these emblems of death—of that death that gives life, the death of Jesus? Shall we, like his trembling attendants, stand afar off from Calvary! Shall we not rather, through the mocking crowd, or through the thick darkness that shrouds the earth, approach the cross that we may behold the Lamb of God that taketh

away the sins of the world? Shall we not draw near to him, that we may be sprinkled with his blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel? and that we, too, may ask, like his penitent fellow-sufferer, to be remembered when he cometh to his kingdom.

VII

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."—HOSEA xiii: 14.

THE universe consists of the living and the lifeless. The lifeless exists by the living, since all things proceeded originally from the creating power of God. The lifeless exists also, not only *by* the living, but *for* it—for the glory of him who created it—for the use of the living which he has created.

The lifeless can impart no life, since it does not possess it. Every-where in nature it is the living that imparts life. In vain would we attempt to produce the humblest plant without the seed which incloses within its woody husk the mystery of life. That seed has transmitted from age to age the animated germ formed by the first

plant that grew. It is that living archetype alone which has power to appropriate to itself the unorganized elements of material nature, and to evolve the living organization to its just proportions. Yet it is the lifeless which is made on earth the basis and the sustenance of the living. The animal may have fed upon the plant, but the plant has derived its sustenance from the lifeless materials of the inorganic world, and yields, in its own death, those elements to the living.

It is in religion as in nature, not only that the living proceed alone from the living, but that life is sustained by death. The seed that germinates is the word of God that lives and abides forever. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. "As the living Father hath sent me," said Jesus, "and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Yet this "bread of heaven" is he that *died* that he might give life—this living food is the flesh and blood of a *crucified* Redeemer.

It is here, then, in view of these sacred emblems of the divine philanthropy, that we may appreciate that strange and solemn truth, as fully verified in

respect to the body as the soul, *that we can live by death alone.* Not only do we sustain our animal life by the lifeless forms of once living plants and animals, but even our own corporeal frame itself subsists by its own decay, and, like the light of a lamp, lives by the very waste that tends to destroy it. How well we know, then, that we can live only by that which has *died for us*—by that which has yielded its life for ours! And how admirably the irrevocable arrangements of Nature itself illustrate the no less immutable laws of divine grace!

How like the work of God that Death should bring forth Life! 'T was he who created the world out of nothing. 'T was he who brought light out of darkness. How appropriate that he should bring life out of death! This was the work of God. This was the mission of Jesus. He came to abolish death; to destroy, through death, him that had the power of death, and to bring life and incorruptibility to light. How glorious the triumph when the enemy is not merely conquered, but compelled to act as a friend until the hour of his destruction! How inconceivable the

power, wisdom, and goodness which can thus reverse extremes and reconcile opposites, educing salvation from ruin, life from death, and incorruptibility from the grave!

Jesus died. He belonged to both the lifeless and the living; and of these great classes must all be members. The living shall become lifeless; again, the lifeless shall become the living. It is the struggle of Life to conquer Death, and this was the combat and the victory of Jesus; and this, too, is the contest and, through him, the triumph of his people. As the germ, touched by the life-giving light of heaven, struggles through the darkness of the clod and lifts itself aloft toward the skies, so the awakened soul springs up to meet and enjoy the vivifying influences of the Sun of Righteousness. How joyful are his beams! how grateful his invigorating power! how glorious his light of life! How ennobling to contend thus against death, and thus with Jesus to wage a warfare against the powers of darkness! How noble the enterprise which the Christian shall thus achieve, and how vain the triumphs of earth's proudest conquerors when compared with the victory of Life over

Death—the rescue of the ransomed from the grave!

Earth's conquerors have fought to live upon the scroll of earthly fame. That moth-eaten scroll contains their names alone! They triumphed by means of death, and pyramids of skulls have been their appropriate monuments; or the cold and lifeless marble, crumbling beneath the touch of Time, and vainly endeavoring to record, by a defaced intaglio, their works of slaughter. Their monuments but record that they have perished, and these monuments shall perish with them! But the monument by which Jesus is here remembered, commemorates the destruction of Death's power, the victory of Life, the conquest of eternal joy and renown. This monument is not a proud mausoleum, a stately obelisk, a sculptured pillar. This loaf, this cup of blessing, these appropriate elements—lifeless, but life-sustaining—speak of Him who became lifeless that we might live by Him. It is in these that faith beholds that celestial manna, that living food, that bread of heaven, which gives life to the world, and sustains the soul

amidst the conflict against the powers of death. And these sacred emblems shall continue to publish in every land, and amidst all the nations and tribes of earth, the dying love and life-giving power of Jesus, until death itself is swallowed up in victory.

VIII.

"We have thought of thy loving kindness, O God! in the midst of thy temple."—PSALM xlviii: 9.

HOW charming is the natural scenery around us! How beautiful the lofty hills which inclose this fertile valley like a gigantic circumvallation! How picturesque their varied forms: here, with gently sloping sides and rich pastures reaching to their summits; and there, precipitous and rock-ribbed, crowned with native forests! How pure and bright the blue heavens above! How grateful the soft verdure of the earth beneath! How great the joy of existence! How dear those vital sensibilities which connect us with these objects! . . . But here shall dubious and desponding thought point to those tombs and say: "This world would, indeed, be beautiful if there were no graves!" And, truly,

time was there were none. Time was when God himself looked abroad upon the land and sea and all that they contain, upon the verdant earth and the blue heavens, and blessed them in their beauty. How glorious then their charms! How abundant and undefiled their joys! No sorrow nor sighing then rent the suffering breast, nor pain nor anguish agonized the frame, nor decay nor malady nor violence led trembling captives to grace the triumphs of Death. For Life then reigned supreme, amidst scenes of pure felicity, over realms uninvaded by a hostile foot and unvisited by fear of change. And there were then no graves! . . . . But what has made these graves and erected these monuments of Death? What malignant Power has thus marred the beauty of the world, and robbed it of its joys? Are not these the consequences of sin, the desolations of Death, the woes of mortality, the sad tokens of guilt and condemnation? O Sin! thou sting of Death! thou minister of woe! how great have been thy victories! how vast thy conquered realms! how galling the tyranny of thy power! These are thy trophies—more widely spread than

those of Grecian or of Roman conquerors! These are thy triumphs, unfettered by mountain chains and unlimited by ocean depths, whose memorials are in the dark caves of the deep waters and upon the high places of the earth. Thine, indeed, O Death! is the only universal empire that has ever flourished. How vain the enterprises of an Alexander, the laurels of a Cæsar, the victories of a Napoleon! It was by thee they conquered, and by thee they were themselves subdued! They reigned over a few territories—over a few of the people of a single generation; but thou over all lands, all earth-born tribes, and all generations of men!

Yet are these graves, indeed, so dread a memorial of departed joys? And would the world be happy and beautiful if there were no graves? Could we now banish Death and live forever amid these earthly scenes, would this be felicity and eternal joy? Ah! no; never while SIN remains! never while unrighteousness and the unrighteous dwell on earth! If the longevity of the antediluvian world contributed to create giants in wickedness and to fill the earth with

crime and violence, until one faithful individual alone remained, what would be the condition of human society if Death placed no barriers in the way of crime? How soon would the rank and hardy weeds of unrighteousness overgrow and choke the tender and delicate plants of godliness! The very qualities which characterize the righteous—the gentleness and meekness, the humility, resignation and love which belong to their very nature—cause them to shrink and perish beneath the rage of the fierce and reckless passions and the proud oppressions of the ungodly. How happy is it, then, that Death in time suspends the conflict! Happy, that as the frost of winter consigns alike the delicate and the luxuriant herbage to the dust, in order that in early spring the contest may be again renewed on equal terms, so Death leaves free to the coming generation the field of the world for the great controversy of good and evil! Oh! then, how great a friend to righteousness is Death while sin yet dwells on earth! How potent an ally to curb the pride of the haughty and to break in pieces the oppressor! What sorrows has he not soothed!

What pains and agonies of life has he not assuaged! Of what deliverances has he not been the author! How indispensable have been his services! Need we wonder that when other consequences of sin have been removed and sin itself destroyed, Death will yet remain—once the first among the powers that have ruled over man in his rebellion, and now the last to be dispensed with among those that have served in his restoration to the divine favor. For, if Death reigned by sin, Jesus hath reigned by Death, and shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father as soon as Death shall be no more!

Shall we say, then: It is Death that robs us of our joys! it is the grave that mars the beauty of the world! Surely, it is not Death by which Christ triumphed! Surely, it is not the grave in which Jesus once reposed! Ah! no. Death is now to us the gate of heavenly joy—these graves are now earth's glory, since that of Jesus is among them! Behold his tomb! No proud monument of earthly pride; no Egyptian pyramid; no spacious mausoleum to commemorate, not the dead who lie beneath—their very names

unknown—but the power of death that conquered them; no lofty pillar reaching to the clouds and erected by human hands, but a NATIVE ROCK!—fit sepulcher for the Author of Nature—a grave whose deep recessses have brought forth life and incorruptibility, and which is a memorial, not of the dead, neither of Death, but of the living and of Life!

These tombs, then, shall no longer mar the beauty of the world around us, since that of Jesus makes them but emblems of the destruction of the grave and types of joy to come. Let us, then, approach their salutary shelter and dwell amidst their shades. Let the sorrows of death become our joys, its mourning our rejoicing. Let tears be sweeter than laughter, and prayer than merriment, and penitence than pride, and Christ than all the world, and his cross and sepulcher than home with all its joys. For death is now the Christian's captive, and the grave his legacy of life—the dawn of mortality's night—the spring of an endless year that knows no winter.

IX.

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee."—PSALM lxxiii: 25.

HOW precious to the heart of the Christian the high privilege of fellowship with God! How poor, in comparison, are all the pleasures of sense and all the honors of the world! It is to meet with the King Eternal, Immortal and Invisible, amidst the sacred mysteries of his spiritual temple, that we are here assembled. We come to seek from that holy presence those elevating and consoling influences which impart a divine peace to the soul, and purify the affections from the polluting touch of life's vain idols. We come to approach the fountain of being and of blessedness, to

drink of its ever-flowing streams of eternal life and joy.

How holy and how reverend is the name of God! How awful the deep mysteries of the Divine nature! That name, that nature, constitute the study of life. Even amidst the darkness of heathenism men strove to grope their way to God, and the multitude of their idols, while it shows the failure, proclaims also the earnestness of their search. And how powerful the influence of the ideas which men entertain of God! How their conceptions of the divine character modify their own! How successful the effort of Satan to degrade man by perverting his views of God! And how purifying, elevating, ennobling, the contemplation of that Divine Creator, as seen within the sanctuary in which his glory stands revealed!

It is here, amidst the sublime visions beheld by the eye of Faith, that God addresses himself to mortals. It is here that his wondrous works are interpreted by precious words. It is here that he appears in his true character as the Great Lord and Creator of the Universe, material and spir-

itual. How glorious the attributes assigned to him in the ancient scriptures, of infinite power, wisdom, goodness, justice, truth, and holiness! How endearing the characteristics which the New Testament still more clearly reveals, of love, mercy, and condescension! By these he approaches us most nearly; by these we realize that God is with us, our Emmanuel, and are emboldened to enter into that divine fellowship to which he here invites us.

If it be granted, as some imagine, to each class of sentient beings in the dominions of nature to perceive its own position and understand the classes that are below it, to man is conceded, with self-consciousness, the loftier privilege of understanding, not only the classes that are below, but those also that are above him. Placed, as it were, in the middle position of the universe, and blending in himself the material and the spiritual, he can reach to the lowest ranks of being, and also to the highest—even to God himself. He can contemplate every phasis of life and every variety of nature. Collecting the traces of the divine presence in his works, he

can connect them with the Being from whom they issue, and, ascending upon the wings of Faith, hold sweet communion with the Infinite and Eternal One.

To establish and maintain this communion is the great end of religion. To unite the soul to God; to erect in the human heart a living temple for his abode; to secure the enjoyment of that divine presence which is the earnest of eternal blessedness: these are its noble and exalted aims—its truest, holiest purposes. And oh! how intimate is that fellowship to which we are thus introduced by the true and living Word! With how much confidence, with how much earnestness we are permitted to address ourselves to God! Under how endearing a title we are invited to his presence! As sons to a compassionate father, we approach him to hear his words; to rejoice in his power, wisdom, and love; to cast our cares upon him, and to repose in the faithful assurances of his unceasing favor. As heirs of God and co-heirs of Jesus, we are invited to rejoice in an undefiled, unfading, and eternal inheritance—in the glorious prospect of

being admitted to behold the glory of God and of the Lamb, and to share with the redeemed the pure perennial bliss of heaven.

And oh! how precious are the influences of that spiritual fellowship which we are permitted to enjoy! How dear to the soul should be every opportunity of cultivating that sacred intimacy, that divine acquaintanceship! How greatly we should desire to draw more closely still the ties that attach us to the heavens! The heart that becomes familiar here with the things of futurity—the soul that is here wont to enjoy habitual intercourse with God, will be no stranger when admitted to the skies. Oh! how sweet it is on earth to have a friend, familiar with our thoughts and feelings, to whom we can unbosom all our cares and all our joys. But what friend can know the soul as God can know it? To what kind ear can we so unreservedly communicate our wishes, anxieties, and hopes? And with what human spirit, encased in mortality, can we form an alliance, a union, a fellowship, so intimate and so complete, as with that divine and gracious Being,

who, by his Spirit, dwells within the heart itself, and, partaking in the deepest secrets of the soul, anticipates our thoughts, interprets all our wishes, and intercedes for all our wakening hopes? Surely the renewed soul, thus intimate with God on earth, will be no stranger when ushered into heaven! Surely it will be thus suitably prepared for the blissful fellowship of the brighter realms above!

It is the contemplation of infinite excellence that exalts, as it is the society of the good and the noble that inspires nobility of soul. Unable of ourselves, perhaps, to form high conceptions, and, without "the bold warmth that generously dares," we catch, by degrees, something of the soaring spirit of the virtue that belongs to the noble minds with which we enjoy habitual intercourse, and thus learn to share and to imitate the excellencies we admire. It is thus that communion with Perfect Goodness shall lead us to be good. Infinite Holiness and Purity shall inspire us with pure and holy affections, and the love of God, awakening in the heart a kindred emotion, shall transform the soul

and invest our nature with a divine beauty. It is while we contemplate the glory of the Lord in the brilliant mirror in which his perfections are revealed, that we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

X.

"I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old.

"I will meditate, also, of all thy works, and talk of thy doings.

"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?"—PSALM lxxvii: 11, 12, 13.

THE sanctuary of God is the house of Memory and of Hope. It is here that we are presented with the only true record of the distant past. It is here, alone, that the solemn events of the approaching future are revealed to us. It is here that the two sacred institutions, which unite to commemorate the death and the resurrection of Jesus, harmoniously blend also the extremes of human destiny, and, reconciling grief with joy, unite the darkness of the grave with the light of life.

How sweet are the memories which are here

awakened! How consoling the remembrances of the divine love which are here so eloquent of hope and peace! With how much happiness may the Christian look back upon the past, which aims not, like the retreating Parthian, a single shaft to wound him! With what feelings of adoration and love may he lift his eyes to that face so "marred," and gaze upon that divine form so wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities! How he may, in that contemplation, realize the mysterious enchantment which heals the dread malady of sin and transforms the soul anew! How stilled, by the potent charm of Jesus' love, are all the bitter reproaches of conscience! How soothed the trembling fears of retribution! How calmed the hopeless agonies of despair! How vainly may the soul seek for the record of its guilt upon the sands over which the rising tide of the divine philanthropy has flowed! How unsuccessfully may it strive to reanimate the sins that were crucified with Christ! It is Christ alone that rises from the tomb of Joseph! It is our Savior, and not our guilt that comes to meet us here! It is the gentle voice

of our Redeemer that cries to us, amidst the memories of the past and from these memorials of his love, "weep not."

But, ah! how different is the condition of the dwellers in the world without! That world is the abode of fear and of remorse. No grateful memories there pour the balm of consolation into the heart torn with anguish. No anodyne of pardoning love there soothes the pangs of unavailing regret. No voice of mercy there speaks peace to the soul tossed upon the dark waters of carnality and crime. Neither does the day-spring of hope arise to dissipate the gloom or gild the threatening clouds of futurity. But Fear and Horror brood over the stormy chaos of unholy passions, and there immold the hideous spectral forms which haunt the guilty conscience and goad the soul to madness. How dreadful is the condition of those who are "without hope and without God in the world!" How dark, and dreary, and desolate their pathway through the waste howling wilderness of life, who have no promise of a "pleasant land" beyond the Jordan's swelling flood!

But, oh! how sweet are the consolations which here gladden the present by the joyful assurances of the future! How bright, how cheering, and how life-giving are the beams of Hope which here dissipate the darkness of ignorance and reveal to us the wide horizon of human destiny! How lofty is that sacred Pisgah to which the angel of the divine covenant here leads us, that we may not only contemplate with delight the grateful streams, the fruitful plains, and the vine-clad hills of our inheritance, but rest in the conviction that we shall be led, under the conduct of our Joshua, to enjoy them! It is here that our Divine Leader marshals us beneath the banners of love. It is here that he guides our weary feet towards those heavenly shores. It is here, by the sacred ark of the divine faithfulness and truth, and amidst the certain assurances of a glorious triumph, that the voice of Jesus cries to us, "Fear not."

Oh! how often, while on earth, did Jesus pronounce those words of consolation and encouragement: "Weep not!" "Fear not!" But, ah! it was he himself who wept that we might rejoice;

who feared that we might hope! It was he who suffered that we might enjoy, who died that we might live! And, oh! transporting thought, it is he who also revives and reigns, that we, too, may rise to behold and share his glory, and rest forever in the blissful mansions which he has prepared for our abode. So that, while in these memorials of the past we see him as he was, it is there, in the glories of the future, that we shall see him as he is; and, while the remembrance of his atoning love imparts sweet consolation, the hope of an eternal reunion inspires the soul with courage, and leads us forward to the fruition of an eternal blessedness.

XI.

"Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord."—PSALM cxviii: 19.

HOW complete is the atonement which the gospel of Christ reveals! The work of a perfect Being, and perfect, like its Divine Author, it requires no addition; it endures no compromise with the officiousness of human vanity and pride; it admits of no improvement by the wisdom of the world. Like the sun in heaven—which is unapproachable, yet comes to us in light, and life, and joy; which imparts its blessings to the wide-spread earth, but can receive therefrom no addition to its beams—the atonement accomplished by the Redeemer, while it shines forth in all the effulgence of the divine philanthropy for the salvation of man, remains alone in its completeness, and while it bestows

its saving mercies, can receive no augmentation of its efficacy from human works of righteousness.

Yet, ah! how unwilling is the human heart to acknowledge its entire dependence upon the divine mercy! How prone is the unenlightened mind to seek some means of participating in the divine work! How apt is human pride to whisper to the soul that its own efforts have gained, at least in part, its own redemption! For what are the cruel rites of heathenism to placate offended idols; what the penance and mortifications of Catholic superstition to atone for sins, or the presumptuous prayers of misguided enthusiasm, supposed to render God propitious to the sinner, but various forms and applications of the fundamental error, that man is or can be more willing to be saved than God to save him; that he has something more to do than simply to accept forgiveness, and must perform some work in aid of the divine means of salvation? Alas! it is when grace superabounds on the part of Heaven, that man is most wanting to himself! It is when the religion of love is freely offered for his accep-

tance that he prefers the self-imposed cruelties of an exacting superstition!

Man meddles with the divine arrangements, but to mar them. His touch defiles what is clean, his ignorance impairs what is perfect, his perversity embitters and empoisons every divine fountain of happiness. God bestowed life, but man has mingled it with death and made it mortal. The Creator made man upright, but man has corrupted himself by his inventions. Jehovah wrought wonders in the earth and gave his statutes to Israel, but his people "forgat his works, and waited not for his counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert, until he gave them their request, and sent leanness into their soul."

But God is "the Rock; his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." And, oh! what infinite goodness appears in all his dealings with men, whether in nature or religion! How has he ever connected enjoyment with the use of the means required for life, and rendered even pain tributary to pleasure! How sweet it is to

breathe the balmy air around us! How grateful the exercise of a function so indispensable to existence! How delightful to him that is hungry the food by which he is sustained! How pleasant to him that is athirst the cool waters of the fountain! Every-where in nature man finds supplied to him the means of pleasure in the means of life, and is led by desire to fulfil the conditions of his being. He can create nothing, he can impart no quality of excellence, he can improve no divine method. He can but receive, accept, enjoy what God has formed and perfected for his use.

And is it not also in religion that man can only accept the divine mercies, and that he shall be led to their acceptance by an awakened desire for that spiritual blessedness which they impart? Can human reason improve upon the divine plan of salvation, or man's feeble powers add efficacy to the means of spiritual renovation which God has instituted? What can be conceived superior to the gospel, in all its impartations of present and eternal blessedness! Here there is no poverty, no deficiency, no feebleness. In it are the

riches, the perfections, the power of God. The forgiveness which it proffers is plenary, the spiritual enjoyments which it confers are unspeakable, the life which it secures is eternal! And that pardon, that joy, that eternal life are not the posted and ledgered dues for labor performed or services rendered, but the unmerited favors of infinite mercy and love—the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the gospel feast, all things are prepared by the King of heaven, and the sinner furnishes no part of the entertainment. In accepting the divine invitation he has but to comply with the established usages of the banquet, and enjoy the rich provisions so bountifully supplied. But, oh! how often do the proud and the rebellious attempt to intrude themselves in contemptuous neglect of the appointed rules of decorum, and without the robes appropriate to the occasion! How prone is the perverse and stubborn heart to betray its vain self-will by presuming to modify or disregard the arrangements of the Most High! And how often does the thankless hypocrite assume a seat at the festal board for base and selfish ends,

without the least perception of the spiritual nature of the repast, or the slightest relish for the "true bread of heaven!"

It is that spiritual discernment, that earnest desire, possessed by the true believer, which ever leads him to these blessed sources of spiritual enjoyment. It is because he is athirst for the water of life that he approaches these living fountains. It is because he hungers after righteousness that he seeks this celestial food. He needs no artificial stimulants to quicken his spiritual appetite, and desires to mingle no foreign ingredients with the heavenly manna by which alone he lives forever. That blissful enjoyment which God himself has connected with the use of the means of spiritual life, wherever spiritual health exists, will ever lead him to the divine repast by which the soul is invigorated and refreshed. And that infinite perfection which every-where marks the arrangements for the salvation of men, will secure the accomplishment of every divine purpose, and the fruition of every glorious hope.

XII.

"The Lord is his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men."—PSALM xi: 4.

HOW various and how pressing are the wants, real or imagined, of our poor fallen human nature! How earnest and how clamorous the appeals of the world! How engrossing and how harassing the anxieties and the labors they occasion! And how artificial and frivolous are the chief enjoyments of society! Alas! it is seldom that the human heart is satisfied with the necessary blessings of life, or content with the simple provision which nature demands and true religion warrants. The manifold lusts of the flesh are ever seeking new gratifications. The eye of Fancy ever roves abroad to discover unknown

charms. The pride of life ever fills the soul with fresh ambitions and with novel fantasies. How difficult for the Christian, commingling in the cares and labors of the world, to escape its entanglements! The fashions of the hour, the gayeties, the amusements, the follies of life, seek constantly to intrude themselves into the best-ordered household. The fondness of natural affection, the yielding temper of marital love, the ceaseless pressure of surrounding example, at once conspire to ensnare and overcome Christian principle, and oft succeed in filling the home of the righteous with many unwonted cares, and fears, and burdens—diverting the attention from the things of eternity and piercing the heart with many sorrows. Oppressive toils, imposed by the tyranny of fashion, enslave each member of the family and leave little time for pious meditation. The exacting demands of a transitory and selfish world forbid the delightful charities of the religious life. The nightly amusements, dissipations, and vain enjoyments of giddy youthfulness replace the once sweet time of family devotion and the hours of needed rest, while, amidst the hurrying

vortex, conscience remonstrates and piety pleads in vain.

Still, amidst its trials, may the burdened soul live on, ever hoping for relief from its unprofitable toils, and ever refusing to yield up the hopes, the joys, and the precious promises of the gospel. Still may the heart desire to seek the Lord where he may be found, to draw near to him while he is near, to wait before him in his sanctuary, and to renew once more the spiritual blessedness of the past How delightful the privilege to be permitted here to withdraw the mind for an interval from the bustle and the unsatisfying pursuits of the passing world! How sweet the moments which may be thus redeemed from the fast-fleeting hours of this vain and mortal life!

Surely, then, it is on this solemn occasion that we should endeavor to draw nigh to God that he may draw nigh to us. Surely, it is here that these sacred memorials of a Savior's dying love should bring us into a peculiar nearness to our Lord. It is here that Jesus is set before us in his sufferings and death for the sin of the world, and that we appear before him as those who, by

faith have been made partakers in his salvation. Are, then, our hearts prepared for true and blessed communion with Jesus? Have faith, and hope, and love been aroused to lively exercise? Do we come with earnestness, sincerity, and penitential tears to the foot of the cross? Do we long in prayerful hope that the blessed vision of redemption may be unfolded before our eyes?

As Jesus came into the world for judgment, and as he shall judge us at the last day, so, most assuredly, is he here to judge us now. Do we realize that it is with his all-seeing eye upon us that we are counseled here to examine ourselves, that we may not eat and drink that condemnation which he awards to those who partake unworthily? Do we come with minds preoccupied and hearts unmoved by the momentous significance of the fact which we commemorate? Has the light of heaven been shut out, and does the darkness of the world still brood upon our souls? It is here, even amidst this darkness, that faith may reveal to us the scenes of Calvary, that our world of earth-born

cares may be shaken as by an earthquake, and the flinty rocks of our insensibility be rent asunder, and that we may be enabled to realize that this was truly the Son of God. It is at this hour that the veil which conceals from us the inner sanctuary may be torn away, in order that we may behold the glory of the Divine presence. It is here we may revive the recollections of the past, and bid the burial-places of memory give up their dead that we may go with them even into the Holy City. It is here that Christ himself may commune with us, and that our hearts may burn within us while we gain larger views of the mystery of redemption, and comprehend what the prophets have spoken of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. And it is here, above all, that the films of error may be taken from our eyes that we may recognize the spiritual presence of our Savior, and that he may be made known to us in the breaking of bread.

How precious, then, this opportunity! How divine that bread of heaven of which, if a man eat, he shall live forever! How glorious the

hopes which this blissful fellowship inspires! How sweet the peace which it diffuses over the soul amid the turmoil of life! How true a foretaste of that rest which remains for the people of God, that inheritance of eternal joy and blessedness which awaits the heirs of salvation!

XIII.

"God is the Lord who hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords even to the horns of the altar."—PSALM cxviii: 27.

THERE is presented to our natural vision no difference so great and striking as that between the heavens and the earth. The little child, even, who sports upon the green and culls the familiar flowers of early spring, gazes with mysterious awe into that azure expanse so bright and pure, filled with the dazzling splendors of the sun or darkening with the approaching tempest. The thoughtless youth, reveling amidst the well-known scenes and pleasures of life, grows serious for a moment when he surveys the unmeasured space where worlds unnumbered roll and shed their distant light. How bold and clear the line which marks the boundary of

earth! How dense the mists that can obscure it! How dusky and opaque those rugged mountains which seem to serve as the abutments of the heavenly arch of azure light! How different in materials, how opposite in character, how unlike in every feature the earth beneath us from the heavens above! However great the differences of earth's varied scenes around us—of field and forest, of hill and valley, of land and water—their boundaries are dim and indistinct compared with that so deeply and abruptly marked by the dark line of the horizon.

But Nature not only distinguishes with striking clearness the things of earth from those of heaven, but teaches us by experience, also, that other precious lesson, that "every good and perfect gift cometh from above." From thence flow light and life with all their joys. Innumerable and mysterious influences thence irradiate the earth, and grateful showers descend to bless the fruitful plains; and thither, too, all beauteous objects tend. Each tree, and shrub, and flower lifts itself aloft from the dark clods of earth towards the bright and glorious sky, as though

it desired to approach the unwasting fountain whence it derives its being and its beauty.

In all these respects, as well as in others, "Nature is Christian—preaches to mankind," and seems to emulate in clearness the teachings of that divine word, which distinguishes the world and the things of the world from the spiritual heavens and the things that are of God, and which counsels us to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and to place our affections upon these.

Surely, it is impossible to confound the glorious realities of true religion with the fleeting vanities of life! How plain the landmarks! How broad the distinctions! How evident the line which separates them! How unlike the one to the other in all that gives character and identity! Darkened, indeed, by the mists of error must be the vision which is unable to descry the spiritual horizon, or to distinguish the bright and beautiful realms of life and glory from the dark and dreary abodes of death and shame!

But, oh! how important that in distinguishing we should place our affections upon the things that are above! If the fair living forms of perishable matter that spring from the earth beneath may rise up to meet and enjoy the solar rays that vivify them, how should not they who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious" be lifted up above the world, and approach nearer and nearer to that "Sun of Righteousness" whose beams impart unfading beauty and eternal life! How should not we seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth, in whom our life is hid, from whom our life proceeds, with whom are all our hopes, our treasures, and our joys!

And how shall we thitherward direct our love? How shall we disengage ourselves from our attachments to the world? Not by willing it, not by desiring it. We love not at our own pleasure, we acquire not by a wish. If the light of the glorious gospel of Christ hath shone upon us; if its heavenly influences have revived us; if we have arisen from the dust of error's death, and our hearts have been opened to receive the holy impressions of divine truth, then shall we be

drawn by irresistible attractions, and strengthened more and more by added grace to ascend above the world and to approach the bright source of being and of blessedness It is by dwelling upon the glorious image of our Redeemer; by maintaining inviolate our relations with that "Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us;" by cherishing that divine communion by which our souls are nourished, that we shall be filled with light, and life, and love, and become participants of that glory upon which we gaze, heirs of that life by which we live, and indwellers in that love through which we love.

And it is now, when we are thus assembled to commemorate what Christ has suffered for us, that we realize the most intimate relations of the spiritual life. It is when he is thus set forth crucified before us, that he should command our homage and our affections. It is when he is thus "lifted up" upon the cross, that he should "draw" all hearts to himself. Here, then, shall we dwell upon his love; here consider that life whose loss we celebrate; here rest in that sacrifice which reunites us to the divine fellowship, and opens to us

the fountains of celestial joy. Happy they who are permitted thus to approach to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ as he appears in his holy temple, and to dwell in the house of the Lord forever! Who can behold without loving him! Who can love him without joy! We set our affections upon things above when we place them upon Jesus. These are where he sits at the right hand of God. He is "our Life." "Our life is hid with him in God." He is our Hope—"the hope of glory"—our "unsearchable riches" and our everlasting bliss. In him alone "wealth, honors, pleasures meet." With him is the "hidden manna," "the white robes of saints," the "palm" of victory, the "morning star" of praise. With him is "power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." In him all things are our own—whether past, present, or to come—the world, apostles, prophets, imprisoned death, emancipated life—since we are his and he is God's. Holy and happy are they who in his blood have washed their robes! They shall be "before the throne of God and serve him day and night in

his temple, and he that sits upon the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

XIV.

"Thou art near, O Lord! and all thy commandments are truth."—PSALM cxix: 151.

HOW precious, how beautiful is truth! How worthless, how injurious, and how deformed is error! And how singularly has the beneficent Creator formed our nature that we might be enabled to discriminate between them! Whether it respects the objects of the material world around us, or the more refined and mysterious things of invisible thought, how wonderfully has he provided us with powers of examination and of just discernment!

How quick and accurate is the sense of vision in discovering the presence and character of objects! how delicate the power of hearing! how discriminating the taste! how sensitive the nerves of smelling! and how reliable the information of

the touch! Yet, however extended the range, however accurate the perception of each sense, the Creator has not restricted us to a single one. We might have been endued with the power of vision only, or with that of taste or touch alone, and have been left to judge by its unaided power of every thing presented to us—to test thereby our food and poison, our safety and our destruction. But God has furnished us with five distinct and peculiar tests to determine the qualities of things; and, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, has endued those objects which are useful or necessary to us with qualities which delight the senses, while poisonous and unwholesome matters are gifted with properties which disgust and offend them. Hence it results, as a general rule, that every thing fitted to give us sensitive enjoyment, is, within its appropriate limits, equally adapted to nourish and maintain us. These are the *good* things of animal life, analogous to the truths of the intellectual and moral nature—physical adaptations imparting at once pleasure, life, and health to the physical nature, just as moral truths

give happiness and vigor to the moral constitution.

And what are all the varied attributes of mind with which we are endowed but so many tests by which we may discriminate between truth and error—the truth that saves, the error that destroys the soul? What are our powers of apprehension, our faculties of comparison, our attributes of reasoning and of judging, but means of investigation and safeguards against delusion? And what that cautiousness in regard to our decisions—that disposition to pause, to hesitate and consider, by which the mind is characterized, but the outpost of the soul to prevent surprise—the indispensable precaution amidst surrounding evil and aggressive error?

When, then, we consider the care which the Divine Being has manifestly taken to furnish us with ability to detect that which is injurious to us, and to discover that which is conducive to our well-being—when we reflect upon the complicated nature of the delicate organizations through which he has thus sought to secure us against imposition, and provide us with the good

and truthful things of the natural as well as the spiritual world, how important must appear the right employment of these faculties, and how valuable the objects they were designed to accomplish! And when we think of the superior nature of the immortal soul and the irrevocable and eternal destiny that awaits it, how incalculably precious must that sacred truth appear by which that soul is saved from ruin, and how dreadful the error by which it is deluded and destroyed!

It is here, in the solemn teachings and institutions of our religion, that this truth is presented to our contemplation. It is here, apart from the vain world in which the soul languishes, that this divine truth may invigorate the heart with the joys of a divine nature, and diffuse through all its recesses that celestial peace which the world can neither give nor take away. For it is here that the King of saints himself provides the feast for his redeemed, and satisfies the hungry soul with the bread of heaven and the water of life. It is here that HE, who is emphatically "the way, the *truth*, and

the life," becomes himself the spiritual repast that yields eternal blessedness and supplies the welling fountain that springs up to everlasting life.

How pure the blessings which this truth confers! How sweet the liberty with which the Son of Man emancipates the soul! How glorious the destiny to which his love invites us! All other truths are precious, more or less, but this is a priceless pearl. All other truths confirm and strengthen one another, but this connects and corroborates them all. Without this, all else were vain and futile—the earth abortive, and man himself an enigma and a failure. With this, the very mysteries of nature are unfolded, the dark places of the universe are lighted up, and consistency, wisdom, order, harmony, and love are seen to pervade the past, the present, and the future.

With what ardent desire, then, should the soul seek this ever-living and life-giving truth! With what readiness should it part with all that earth holds dear to secure the possession of this inestimable boon! And with what earnestness

should it devote its powers and energies to the discovery and appreciation of that truth which is at once its light and life, its peace, its glory, and its joy!

But the truth that is so precious is not abstract or indefinite truth. It is not a mere mental conception—an unreal or ideal generalization. Nowhere in the Book of God have we any revelation of this character—any truth that is not eminently practical. If it be stated that "God is spirit," it is that he may be worshiped in spirit. If we are informed that "God is love," it is that we may be influenced thereby to love one another. If it be announced that "God is light," it is that we may walk in light as he is in the light. And if he be revealed to us in Christ as "the truth," it is that we may so receive him into the soul, and banish thence the false idols of sensuality and corruption.

Christ is indeed "the truth," since he is "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his substance"—"God manifested in the flesh"—"the only begotten of the Father,

full of grace and truth"—"Immanuel, God with us." He is "the truth," as opposed to false divinities. He is "the truth," as opposed to Satan, the father and the impersonation of falsehood. He is "the truth," as the fountain of salvation—the "author and the finisher of the faith." The Gospel is "truth," because it brings tidings of him. We are "in him that is true," when we are "in Jesus Christ;" and we "know the truth" when we know him, and realize that he is "*the* liar who denieth that Jesus is the Christ."

Especially, here, in partaking of the mystic symbols of that sinless sin-offering upon the Christian altar, should we endeavor to appreciate the value of that sacred truth by which we live, endeared by dearest ties, approved by loftiest reason, received by living faith, and confirmed by an experience of the divine grace. That truth which came from heaven and thither reascends, shall bear to the bosom of the Infinite those who have been purified by its love, while all who refuse obedience to its authority and walk in the broad road of error, shall descend to the dreary

abodes of death, where their night of ignorance and crime shall be deepened in darkness by the storm of divine wrath, and aggravated in horror by the hideous presence of Satan and his malignant hosts, and the never-ending terror of eternal retribution.

XV.

"With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light."—PSALM xxxvi: 9.

WE are here convened to dwell on themes of deepest moment, to engage in heavenly ministrations, and to redeem a few sweet hours from the evil days of earth's corroding cares. How sacred the moments which are thus ransomed through the divine and pervading efficacy of the name of Jesus—of him by whom we are ourselves redeemed from death and ransomed from the grave! To him may they each one be consecrated! To him may each one bear the tribute of its praise!

It is here that solemn thoughts become us! It is here that soul-absorbing themes await us in the vestibule of heaven to lead us to the inner temple of the divine abode. It is here that we

are presented with the memorials of that death omnipotent which has doomed the grave itself to desolation and forever abolished the domination of the powers of darkness. It is here that we are permitted to approach that perennial fountain of love from which we derive eternal life and joy.

How solemn should be our thoughts of futurity! How serious our communings with the unseen world to whose eternal shores we hasten! How mysterious the gloom in which it is enshrouded! How eventful the moment when that gloom shall vanish from before the unsealed vision of the soul! Surely that approaching future may command our soberest thought, and claim our deepest and most strict regard! Surely its immutable decisions may well engross the hopes and fears of deathless beings awakened to the dread realities which Truth reveals!

Who can contemplate the dissolution of the material frame without emotion! Who can meditate upon the inevitable hour of death, and prepare to resign this pleasing, anxious being without one longing gaze of fond remembrance!

But, ah! if death be momentous, how much more solemn is the thought of life! How much more serious the reflection that we live—that we are raised from the senseless dust to breathe the vital air; to gaze upon the works of God; to hear his words; to move, and act, and feel; to realize that we are moral and responsible beings, that our every word and action is chronicled in heaven, and every thought reported by an unseen but unerring stenographer of the soul! Ah! no; it is not death, the sleep of mortality; it is not the calm and dreamless repose of the tomb, nor peaceful rest in the bosom of Abraham from the sorrows of the world, that may be truly deemed of serious moment in comparison of life!

Yet, ah! how few there are who truly realize the dread mystery of life, and the momentous character of its eternal results! How many sport with time! How many waste away the sacred hours of life in thoughtless levity, or in the dreamy stupor of unawakened ignorance and unconscious guilt!

Salutary may be the repose of the body, but the sleep of the soul is fatal. And, ah! how

often doth the soul sleep—exposed, unwatched, and undefended—to become a prey to the spiritual assassin, or a hapless prisoner manacled with fetters of dark despair! How often doth even the Christian slumber, lulled by the treacherous cup of earthly pleasure, and insensible to the life, and light, and joy of that divine radiance which shines forever in the blissful realms of the King eternal, immortal, and invisible! How important, then, the admonition to those that wake, to watch and pray lest the sleep of the soul should steal upon them and steep their spiritual sensibilities in lethal oblivion; and how appropriate to each of those who sleep, the solemn call: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!"

XVI.

"O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep."—PSALM xcii: 5

HOW wonderful are the divine arrangements in nature and in grace! How overwhelming the grandeur of conception, the loftiness of purpose, and the infinitude of power, wisdom, and goodness manifested in God's dealings with man, as his Creator and Redeemer! How mysterious the might by which he brings extremes together, and compels them to succeed each other by a charming series of gradations, or to unite in harmonious action, or even to produce each other! Day subsides into night, life leads to death: again, night gives place to day, and death to life. It is God who bends into the graceful ellipse of the planetary orbits the right lines of the two great opposing forces of

the universe. It is God who, in the beginning of his creation, brought light out of darkness, and it is he who will bring good out of evil in the closing triumphs of the great plan of redemption.

Among the singular incidents of human history which tend to illustrate this divine prerogative, we note that Satan, the apostle of death, is made to be the first preacher of life and glory. It was he who first announced to man that sublime revelation: "Ye shall not surely die; but ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"—a revelation which, though indeed false in its primary intention, is rendered most true in fact by the divine power in the Gospel of Jesus, who correspondingly says of those who shall obtain that future world: "Neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." And surely the redeemed shall be, in one sense, as gods, being the children of the Most High, the brethren and co-parceners of Christ, knowing good and evil—not, indeed, as at first, the knowledge of good lost and evil

got, but now that of evil lost and good obtained!

Again: it is in harmony with the divine procedure, that, as man died by *eating*, so it is by EATING that he shall live forever. "I am the living food," said Jesus, "which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this food he shall live forever, and the food that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." The literal truth of Eden has its counter-sense in the spiritual truth of Christianity; and, as the mortal taste of the forbidden fruit brought death to the world, so a participation in the heavenly food presented by the Gospel, communicates the enduring vigor of eternal life.

It is to partake of this tree of life of God's true paradise, that we are here invited. How rich are its twelve-times varied fruits! How potent the virtue of its healing leaves, by which the deadly wounds which sin has inflicted upon the nations may be forever healed! How glo-

rious a privilege, that we are thus permitted to become partakers of Christ, and to live by Him who died that we might live, and rose that we might reign!

Yet it is not alone in the sanctuary of God that we are admitted to this privilege; nor is it alone in the divine institution of the Lord's supper, that we eat the flesh and drink the blood of our Redeemer. It is here, indeed, that, by these sacred emblems, we can most easily realize the figure in which Christ thus represents himself as the source of spiritual life; but it is in the meditations of the heart in the night-watches; in humble submission to the divine commands; in trustful reliance upon divine promises; in every exercise of faith; in every emotion of Christian love; in every act by which we enjoy communion with Christ, that we receive him as "the heavenly food that gives life to the world," and, renewing our fainting energies, are enabled to toil onward and upward to the better land.

It is especially amidst the abodes of sorrow, and in the dark hours of affliction, that we are likely to be found nearest to the "man of sorrows and

acquainted with grief." It is not in the mansions of the great and the opulent, not in the festal halls of dissipation, nor in the proud palaces of kings, that we are likely to find the humble Nazarene. But it is amid the disappointments of life; in the days of mourning and of desolation; in the hours of self-abasement and penitential love, that we meet with Jesus. It is in the home of poverty and in the lowly mansion of the wretched that we may have fellowship with Christ. It is in the garden, not of delights, but of anguish—in Gethsemane, whose soil is watered with his tears and with his blood, or upon the bare and rocky mount, extended upon the agonizing cross, that we may find our Savior. It is here that we are called upon to contemplate that divine love that was stronger than death. It is here that the dying sinner is permitted to look upon him thus lifted up, that, believing, he may have life through his name! It is here that all may approach him in humble adoration, and yield the soul captive to the conqueror of death and the grave, who has triumphed for us over all our enemies, and is become our light and life, our hope and our salvation.

XVII.

"He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies." Psalm xviii: 11.

CHRISTIANITY deals not with trifles, nor was the mission of Jesus for unimportant ends. The subjects and the purposes which are here presented to our view are, on the contrary, of the deepest moment, and of the most absorbing interest. Rejecting the vain objects of the fleeting world, and all the idle themes which appertain to earth, the Gospel embraces the things of life and death, and, entering at once upon the stern realities of human destiny, dwells on those solemn truths which, from their very nature, are fitted to engross the attention of every human being.

Yet life and death, the great themes of religion, in which man is so deeply concerned, are among the great *mysteries* of the universe. How little

we know of life, although it is every-where around us, and even within us! How much less we know of death, of which we have had, as yet, no personal experience! Doubtless, however, it is this very obscurity which gives to these subjects an interest so deep and permanent. What we have fully explored and comprehended, wearies us by familiarity, and loses its attractive charm. But mystery awakens curiosity; engages attention; excites inquiry; gives activity to thought and zest to enjoyment. How just, then, that the most important things should be the most mysterious! How proper that we should be thus led to dwell upon these with fixed attention! How fitting, also, that we should be most deeply interested in the things which Christianity presents! Nature attracts us by the wonders of a life and a death which are temporal, but religion enchains the soul by the deeper mysteries of a life and a death which are eternal.

In proportion as the mysteries presented to us deepen, *they approach nearer to God.* He is the great mystery of mysteries, and we draw nearer to Him as we approach the veil that conceals the

sacred arcana of his inner temple. *Life* natural is to us a great enigma, and it reveals to us much of all that we yet know of God; but DEATH, that still greater mystery, will open to the soul still nearer views of God in the world of spirits. In our investigations of nature, we may trace effects to their immediate causes, and discover important truths in regard to the divine system of material things. It is when we would seek to explain and analyze these causes themselves, that we find ourselves involved in deeper and more remote researches, and it is then, when we approach the *mystery of the divine will*, that we are brought nearer to the invisible Creator. It is untrue, then, that a mystery that is truly divine, can obstruct our progress or hinder our vision. On the contrary, it tends to give us truer and nobler views of the Deity, because it brings us nearer to Him, and yet veils, in a favoring obscurity, that dazzling glory which would otherwise blind our feeble vision. Thus it is not the light of day that gives to us the most glorious and sublime view of the material universe. We then see the earth beneath us, and the blue expanse above us, with its

single sun, on which, from its very brightness, we dare not gaze, and whose very light conceals from us the rest of the material system. It is when that light is withdrawn, and darkness casts her sable mantle over the things of earth, that our view, instead of being contracted, is enlarged, and fixed upon the heavens. It is then that worlds upon worlds arise before us, and *millions* of suns appear in place of one, and distant and still more distant orbs lead us farther and farther through the regions of illimitable space, to the unresolved nebulæ of utmost vision; to the sublime mysteries of nature; to the overwhelming grandeur and magnificence of the divine creation; to the infinite power and glory of the Creator. So, also, though life reveals much of God to man, it is *death* that shall unfold much more. It is the night of death, the darkness of the grave, which, while it hides from us the earth, shall reveal to us the heavens, and display to the soul those sublime mysteries of Deity which, though now above us and around us, are yet concealed from us by the very brightness of our day of life.

But what is true of our own life and death, is

eminently so of *the life and death of* JESUS. How great was the mystery of the life of Christ! How thick the veil in which the divine glory was then enshrouded! Yet it was thus alone that man was enabled to approach so nearly, and to contemplate so fully the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. It was through that mystery of the *incarnation* that God was indeed revealed to mortals. It was amidst the darkness of the world that his infinite love, mercy, and condescension shone forth to the view of men. But ah! how much greater *the mystery of his death!* and how much *more* it presents to us of God! What new and wonderful developments it gives of the divine character! What awful and sublime conceptions of the Infinite One it presents to the soul! What startling thoughts it suggests of the things invisible! What sorrowful memories of the past; what blissful fellowship of the present; what joyous hopes of the future, cluster in the broad heaven which the death of Christ reveals! Ah! it is here that we see more of God than angels knew before! It is amidst the darkness of the grave of Jesus that

new visions of God arise, more sublime and glorious than all that could precede! It is, indeed, the bright light of His presence that *dazzles and blinds*. It is LIGHT that renders Him inaccessible, so that no man can approach Him. It is into the thick darkness that we must enter, like the leader of ancient Israel, if we would find Him. It is when He shrouds his glory in the veil of mortality; when He partakes of our deep woes, and enters into the gloom of our dark and dreary prison, that we may presume to draw near to Him in trustful faith, to enter into a holy spiritual communion, and partake of the ineffable joys which wait upon his presence.

XVIII.

"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."—Psalm xlvi: 11.

HOW frail and weak is human nature! Born into the world a helpless infant unable to provide for its humblest wants, it is only through the assiduous care of others that man can at all be preserved in life. A mother's gentle breast must nourish, her hands protect, her thoughtful mind provide for and supply her feeble charge. And, oh! how long, and through what anxieties and fears, what dangers and what toils, must parental care lead the tottering steps of childhood, and the thoughtless inexperience of youth, up to the years of maturity and reflection! Even then, with all his boasted powers, how dependent is man upon exterior sources for sympathy, encouragement, and support! Rejoicing in

his fancied strength, and esteeming nothing impossible to his efforts, he yet finds that alone and unaided, his strength is but weakness, and discovers that it is necessary to lean upon others, and to merge his fragmentary being in the strong and lofty edifice of society, to which he may impart, while from it he hopes to receive strength and elevation.

But even here, environed by all the aids and sympathies which spring from the natural or social relations and friendships of human life, how deeply the thoughtful mind must realize man's native feebleness in the dark seasons of unrequited toils, of disappointed hopes, of unlooked-for and irretrievable calamities—when the world reveals its nothingness, and the heart despairs of heaven, and no human agency can afford relief! And still more, when life wanes amidst its cares, and is ready to perish with the perishing things which have occupied its busy hours—when man grows old and "his strength faileth," when the faculties of mind and body have become enfeebled, and childish fancies and dim memories return along with the tottering steps of infancy

in old age—and most of all, when the hour of dissolution comes, and no mortal skill can alleviate or remedy the suffering that must be endured alone—when every power that life and nature gave is wholly lost—when the eye is glazed and sightless, and the ear no longer hears the voice of affection, and the hand returns no more the grasp of friendship: oh! it is then that the heart may truly realize the utter feebleness and frailty of human nature, the emptiness of all its claims, the nothingness of all man's worldly hopes!

In taking part of flesh and blood, Jesus partook of our infirmities, and bore our weaknesses, as, in his own body, he bore our sins. It is not in his maturer years merely that we are to behold the man Christ Jesus. It is not through fanciful speculations concerning his natural endowments, or his human motives; or in seeking to be wise above what is written of his spiritual conflicts, that we are to contemplate or to comprehend our blessed Lord's humanity. It is rather in the feeble infant in its unrocked cradle, the helpless Christ-child, nurtured upon a mother's bosom, or

hastening to her side with pattering feet for protection or for solace; it is amidst the growing years of youth and all its trials, winning divine and human favor by meek submission and by cheerful aid; it is in the fulfillment of his sacred mission, as a homeless wanderer, in weariness and want, a gentle minister of grace, and peace, and truth, sympathizing with human suffering, partaking of human woes, and enduring the contradictions of the ignorant, and the contumely of the proud—above all, it is when, finally, through the eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot to God as the propitiation for our sins—it is in that supreme hour, when faint but firm, he experienced for us the bitterness of that death in which all human weakness has its consummation, that we may contemplate aright the Blessed One who became our kinsman that he might be our Redeemer. Had he not assumed our nature, he could not have borne our griefs or carried our sorrows. Had he not become a partaker of flesh and blood, he could not, through death, have accomplished our deliverance, and destroyed the dominion of him that had the power of death.

That mighty work was not completed until the last agony was endured, the last loud cry was uttered, and the expiring lips had pronounced the verdict, "It is finished," as he bowed his head in death, and hung motionless, and pale, and cold upon the bloody cross.

He was, indeed, "crucified through weakness," yet it was in that moment of extremest weakness that he gained the victory. What neither the divine law, nor rich oblations, nor human power could do, was accomplished in the death of Jesus. God's weakness is stronger than men, and He who has constructed the lofty mountains with grains of sand, and with drops of water the boundless ocean, has ever chosen weak things to confound the mighty, and the lowly to abase the proud. Through his "foolishness," so much wiser than human wisdom, he has reconciled us to himself by the death of his Son, in vindicating thereby the inviolability of the divine justice, and rendering the divine mercy accessible to the believer. "What shall we say, then, to these things? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with

him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? God that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?"

Hence it is, that with love's memories of the past, we can blend the joyful hopes of the future, and thus continue to celebrate the death of Christ until he come. For he it is, that liveth and was dead; and behold, he is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of death and of hades. And surely, "if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled," shall we be "saved by his life." If the rich boon of forgiveness and gracious acceptance is accorded to sinners, oh, how untold and inconceivable the blessings that are prepared for saints! If, in the weakness of humanity, Jesus could accomplish the mighty work of reconciling the world through death, how much more shall he not now save the reconciled with an eternal redemption, by the power of an endless life! Since it is in death that all human

weakness culminates, it is in life that strength divine resides; and if, in the weakness of death, he has destroyed the dominion of sin, shall he not in the strength of life, secure victory over the grave? If while on earth, straitened in the shackles of mortality, "crucified through weakness," he overcame the powers of darkness, how much more now, that he liveth by the power of God, shall he not come in the glory of his Father and with all the holy angels, to obtain an eternal redemption for us! It is then, indeed, that the last enemy shall be destroyed; that this natural body, which is "sown in weakness, shall be raised in power;" that "this mortal shall put on immortality, and death be swallowed up in victory."

XIX.

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." Psalm 1: 2.

HOW treacherous is the darkness! How full of ambushes! How fearful in its terrors, its dangers and its crimes! How useless the keenest vision amidst its rayless gloom! How unavailing in its entanglements the struggles of human power! How secret, too, are its approaches! How silently at eventide, when

> "The trailing garments of the Night
> Sweep through her marble halls,"

does she steal forth to pursue the retreating footsteps of the day! With faltering pace and shrinking fear, she follows in the distance, seeking the shelter of each shadowing object, creeping along the eastern mountain slope, or reaching forward beneath the dusky mantle of a favoring cloud!

How she shuns the high summits, where the sun's bright banners continue to float, and seeks to gain the victory—not by brave assault, but by cowardly stratagem! And how do her dark legions tremble and retire before even a straggling parting ray from the western heavens?

Light, on the other hand, how aggressive! How quickly, at the *reveille*, she marshals her forces and speeds across the vast abyss of space upon her mission of glory! How speedily she puts to flight the powers of darkness! With what rapidity she assails their fortresses and their towers! With what facility she surmounts their bulwarks, levels their defenses, exposes their secret machinations, discovers their ambuscades, and reveals their guilt! How she sheds brightness and beauty over the earth, where brooded the blackness of darkness and despair! How she opens the prison-doors, breaks the chain of the captive, and replaces the silence and the desolation of death by the joyous songs and blessed activities of life!

It is thus, in the moral world, that the sun of righteousness shines forth out of Zion upon the

darkness of the soul. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." And it is from the mount of his holiness, from Zion the joy of the earth, that he sends forth the light of life. It is here he displays his power and his glory. It is here he hath "commanded the morning" and "caused the day-spring to know his place." From hence he hath ordained that his arrowy rays of light shall "take hold of the ends of the earth" to put to flight the hosts of darkness. Here is known "the way where light dwelleth," and here alone are the "paths to the house thereof." For the church of God is the "light of the world." To it are committed those precious oracles which alone can illuminate the dark places of the earth, and to it appertains the mighty work of spreading abroad the life-giving truth—"the grace of God which bringeth salvation!"

How sad the condition of a world lying under the dominion of the Prince of Darkness! How feebly we may realize its sorrows, its sufferings, its hopeless despair! How imperfectly we may comprehend its mysterious enigmas, or by human reason explore the secrets of its wretchedness!

How vainly seek relief for its miseries in the impotency of man's devices! And oh! how great that sacred trust, that priceless boon—the divine commission which alone can open the blind eyes and turn men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and which God has given into the hands of his people! What duties, what responsibilities are theirs in presence of the awful facts of the present and of the hastening future! How deeply should they meditate upon the obligations which rest upon the church as the pillar and support of the truth! How appropriate that in this hour, when these sacred memorials are before us, and that precious sacrifice which takes away the sin of the world is set forth in these expressive symbols, that we should dwell on the unspeakable gift of God, and ponder the lessons which it teaches! Have our own souls been clothed with the light of its truth? Have our hearts been divinely impressed with its significance? Has our nature been renovated by its power and clothed with the beauty of holiness? Are we walking in light as the children of light? And, in fulfillment of our

mission, are we reflecting that light upon others, and striving to dissipate the ignorance and darkness of the world? Are we seeking to deliver precious souls from the bondage of priestly power, and rescue helpless victims from the debasing slavery of sin? Are we, emulous of our Divine Exemplar, laboring to destroy the works of the devil, to expose the mysteries of iniquity, to raise the fallen, cheer the faint, support the feeble, and diffuse the glorious light of the Gospel throughout the benighted abodes of ignorance, superstition, and cruelty?

Alas, how many there are who fail to fight the good fight of faith! How many who obstruct the progress of light and truth! How many who mutiny against the Captain of Salvation! Else why have we around us these battalions arrayed against each other? Why these different standards, these opposing counsels, these conflicting orders? Why do the mists of error which the night has gathered conceal true allies both from each other and from the sunshine of heaven? Why these party names, these unkind dissensions, these rivalries and ambitions? Where is that

concentration of resources which can alone supply the means of warfare? Where is that unity of power which can alone give victory? Surely it is the hour when the followers of Christ should awake from the lethargy which ages of darkness have imposed. Surely it is time that all who have entered into His holy covenant, should hearken to his voice, and assemble themselves together for the great final conflict of righteousness and truth.

It is here within these sacred precincts that we should realize that divine spiritual unity which can be preserved only by the bond of peace. Partakers of one bread, we are one body. Animated by one Spirit, cheered by one hope, led by one Lord, sustained by one God and Father of all, it is here we should ever feel the eternal ties which bind us to each other. It is here amidst the light of life and the joys of salvation that we may renew our vows of fealty. It is here we may put on the armor of light, and prepare to contend together "against principalities: against powers; against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high

places." It is from the heights of Zion we must go forth, marshaled beneath the banners of our heavenly King, in compact array, aggressive, invincible and victorious, to scatter the legions of darkness and fill the earth with the glory of the Lord.

XX.

"The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord; thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints."—Psalm lxxxix: 5.

IT is in the sanctuary of God that the mystery of man's condition can find its only interpretation in the wonders of redemption. It is here alone, that light dawns upon the night of the grave, and that the enigmas of a present world, and of a mortal life, at once so sweet, and sad, and strange, can be to any extent resolved. It is here that an inscrutable Fate, which, like the fabled Saturn, seems to destroy its own offspring, gives place to a beneficent Power, gathering the harvests of Time into the garners of eternity, and selecting from the nurseries of earth those flowers which may fitly bloom forever in the gardens of heaven. It is here that order is imparted to a

seeming chaos; meaning and purpose to an unintelligible maze; dignity to debasement; power to weakness; wisdom and goodness to seeming unprofitableness and decay. It is here, too, amidst these wondrous lessons, that man discovers his own inefficiency, and learns to trust, in trembling hope and humble adoration, an over-ruling and Infinite Intelligence.

It is hence here in vain that carping unbelief may seek to awaken dubiety or fear through those uncomprehended facts of the present, which appertain to the unrevealed secrets of the future. However mysterious the controversy between good and evil; however varied the fortunes of the struggle; however protracted the toils and sufferings of the righteous, or boastful the transient triumphs of the ungodly, it is here that an assured faith preserves in perfect peace the heirs of salvation, the called according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. It is hence here that the disappointments of life, the failure of fond human hopes, the complications which oft enshroud in obscurity the plans of Providence, disturb not

an equanimity which reposes upon the Divine faithfulness; and though the seeds of truth may oft be scattered upon the waste places of the earth to yield apparently no genial harvest, though the brightest and the best may be prematurely snatched away, or the cherished objects of affection be ensnared by the Tempter, and dragged to endless ruin, there still remains the blessed assurance amidst all the dimly comprehended problems of the present, that the eternal God is our only refuge, and that "beneath are the everlasting arms." Amidst the inscrutable mysteries of nature, the pious heart humbly rests secure in the infinite wisdom and goodness of an Omnipotent Power who fills the universe with created wonders in munificent profusion, and imparts the charms of life and beauty to myriad forms of dependent beings, each perfect in its sphere, and tributary to the grandeur, the glory, and the completeness of the whole. Nor, amidst the still greater mysteries of religion, does the renewed soul fail equally to humble itself before the unsearchable judgments of God, and, encompassed with the doubts, the fears, the oppressive secrets

of human life and destiny, to accept in joyful confidence the guidance of Divine truth.

It is hence here that to hearts beleaguered within the narrow walls of sense, Faith, like the swift-winged passenger-dove, brings blessed messages from the distant and unseen world, to enlighten and to cheer. How joyful these news of approaching deliverance! How sweet these assurances of triumph! How absorbing these intimations of intended movements, these glimpses of ulterior purposes! Involved in sin and sorrow, mortality and death, by one man's disobedience, we learn that by the obedience of one we shall be ransomed from the power of the grave, and that "as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all to justification of life." If hence, sin has reigned unto death, righteousness shall reign unto eternal life, the Omnipotent One having provided for every woe a solace—a balm for every wound.

How glorious is the Divine scheme of redemption! How potent and far-reaching those agencies which countervail the pervading virus of evil

which flows onward in the life-current of our race! What world wide oppositions! What wondrous analogies and resemblances! If the first Adam gave rise to sin, the second Adam brings in an everlasting righteousness. If the former brought death upon the world, the latter brings life and immortality. If, in the one case, the innumerable offenses of many supplemented the disobedience of one—in the other, the obedience unto death of one, singly and alone, secured for all the free gift of justification.

It were, however, to conceive unworthily of this glorious salvation to esteem it merely the counterplot or counterpoise of sin, and to imagine that, with this, the redemption which is in Christ Jesus forms but an equation whose members are equal to each other. While, with our feeble powers, we may not essay to sound the depths of that vast deluge of suffering with which sin has overwhelmed the world, or estimate aright either the malignity of its nature or the eternal consequences which result from it; nor, upon the other hand, form any adequate conception of those gifts of grace and blessedness which God

has prepared for those that love him, we are nevertheless divinely assured that the work of Christ is not a mere antagonism to sin, a mere neutralization of its power and its effects, a mere restoration to a precedent condition. Ah! no; in the infinite purposes of Jehovah a nobler, mightier consummation is designed. It is here that the eternal is to replace the temporal; the spiritual, the carnal; the Paradise of God, the earthly garden of Eden. It is here that the most precious and beautiful things of earth can be but types and imperfect emblems of the unfading glories of the future, and that the divine promises shall confer a "far more exceeding" weight of endless bliss than sin had here ever exacted of suffering and affliction. Whatever, in the decrees of a just and holy God, may be the significance of the symbolic pictures of the Apocalypse, or of the brief literal announcement of "everlasting punishment," or an "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power," as the doom of the finally impenitent; however deep and awful may be the meaning of the announcements, both of the

privation of good and of the infliction of evil, in which the wicked shall share with those malignant spirits who left their first estate and seduced man from his allegiance, it may not be affirmed that the penalties of retribution shall bear an exact proportion to the rewards of the righteous, or that the unmerited gifts of grace shall be bestowed upon the redeemed in equal measure only with the merited anguish of the lost. It is in the dispensation of blessedness that a beneficent Deity, with whom judgment is "strange," and who takes no delight in the death of the wicked, has imposed upon himself no limitation, but reserves for the righteous the highest joys, honors, and dignities of heaven, exalting them to the heirship of all things, and to the participation of infinite delights adapted to new and enlarged capacities of enjoyment. If sin, then, with its evils, has abounded, grace, with its blessings, hath much more abounded. If death, in all or any of its forms, has reigned by one, much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

How precious, then, in the sweet hours of sacred meditation, these simple but expressive memorials of that death which brings to us more than life—of that humiliation which has exalted humanity to the throne of the universe! How dear to the heart are those yearnings of faith and love which here bring us near to him who hath washed us from our sins in his own blood! And oh! how bright, amidst the darkness of the world and all the sad mysteries of sin, that light of eternity which here illumines the pathway of the just!

XXI.

"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."—ROM. xii: 2.

THERE is but one true religion; all else are counterfeit. There is but one religion that can take a man to heaven; all others are useless. And the religion that can take a man to heaven is a religion that renders him fit for heaven. For heaven itself would be a place of punishment to those who were unfit for its society and averse to its enjoyments; and a religion would be justly discredited that promised admission to a state of perfect holiness and happiness, and yet had no obvious tendency to prepare man for that condition.

Man is made fit for heaven by being restored

to the divine image, favor, and fellowship. A religion that does not do this is but an empty profession. All true religion leads to fellowship with God. Satan destroys man only by separating him from God. All pain and sorrow are in this, and the judicature of heaven knows no higher punishment than "an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." It is much to be feared that this great object of religion is overlooked by many of those who make a profession of Christianity. How often this seems to be regarded merely as a system of redemption or salvation! How often it is looked upon from a selfish point of view, as something which a man may add to his other possessions; as something which may be acquired, like property, for private and personal advantage! How often it is conceived to be something which is offered to men as a commodity, which they may obtain upon certain terms, of which the ministers of the Gospel are supposed to be the negotiators!

But Christianity is very far from being a mere system of redemption from sin, or salvation from

punishment, or selfish rewards for obedience. It designs not only to bestow remission of sins, but to effect a *renovation*—a *regeneration* of the soul. Indeed, it is not too much to affirm that *it can be a means of salvation only as it is a means of renovation*—in other words, that no one can be saved by it who is not renewed by it. Hence, no one can be truly said to possess himself of religion, since, on the contrary, it is religion itself which takes possession of man, and, "in Christ Jesus," nothing is of the least avail but "a new creature."

The person thus renovated is a *spiritual* one. He is "created anew in righteousness and true holiness." He is "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." He is a living temple for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is to him the earnest of a spiritual inheritance—the antepast of an eternal reunion with God.

Yet how many there are who seem to have no such conceptions of the nature and intentions of the Gospel; who are but spots in the divine love-feast of Christianity, clouds without rain,

trees that bear no fruit, failing fountains which mock the thirsty traveler! They profess to follow Christ, but in works deny him. They are sensual because they have not the Spirit, and, like those who partook of the loaves and fishes, seek Jesus from selfish motives, indisposed to receive his spiritual instructions, and ignorant of the nature of his reign. Those declarations which are the most precious to the sincere believer, are to them "hard" sayings which they can not hear, and which, if forced upon their attention, will speedily expose their true character and designs.

How great a master of the heart was Jesus, who could thus detect and exhibit the false zeal of selfishness, and disperse the thronging multitude of seeming friends! How pertinent the question to the remaining few: "Will ye, also, go away?" How unavailing the ready sponsorship of Cephas with him who knew that, even among those selected by himself, there was one betrayer!

Many, indeed, are called, but few are chosen in the dispensation of the Gospel. The good seed of the heavenly kingdom falls often on un-

congenial soil, where it finds no depth and can establish no permanent relation. How many who seem to enjoy great privileges here, will fail to be acknowledged in the day of final account by him who weighs the actions and appreciates the motives of men! It is not a mere verbal acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus, nor, as many seem to suppose, a mere connection with his church, that will take a man to heaven. An outward union to the church is, indeed, an important movement—it is one step in the way; but heaven is high—it needs more than one step to gain it!

Some seem strangely to imagine that it is only the grosser and more public vices that religion proscribes. They appear to think that a Christian may cherish envy and avarice in his heart; that he may live at variance with his neighbor and suffer anger to rankle in his bosom, and yet continue within the pale of salvation. They distinguish sins into venial and mortal, and suppose that strife, enmity, and uncharitableness are really less offensive to God than robbery and murder. They themselves fear and abhor the

thief and the assassin because they have something to lose by them, and think that the Divine Being will regard them with the same feelings of displeasure, and look, as they do, with greater allowance upon the person who secretly envies or hates his brother. They forget, however, that to him who looks upon the heart, anger and avarice are the *real* crimes—the very causes which lead to those consequences so much more criminal in the sight of men. They are ignorant that the works of the flesh—the workings of the carnal mind—are all alike hateful to God, who needs not to await the overt act before he ascertains the secret character, and with whom no outward decency of behavior can cloak the moral turpitude of the soul.

It is not mere formal adoration of a carved, a graven, or a molten image that constitutes idolatry. On the contrary, it is the giving the heart's affections to any thing that is not God. Any thing may become an idol except God, and he only is free from idolatry who loves the Lord his God with "all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." "Alas!" cried the leader of

Israel, "the people have sinned a great sin, and have made unto them gods of *gold*." What matters it whether it be a golden *calf* or a golden *eagle*, if it usurp the place of Him who should be the delight of the soul, the charm of the heart, the lord of the affections and desires? He who enshrines the passion of avarice in his bosom is as great an idolater as he who bows before the hideous image of Vishnu; yet the crime of covetousness, like that of witchcraft, seems to be unknown in modern days, and to have wholly disappeared from the revised codes of ecclesiastical discipline.

But the Christian is one who has "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty," and has no desire to avail himself of the license afforded by modernized Christianity. His divine code of morals tolerates no "fashionable vices," and permits no venial crimes. Renovated in heart, he "purifies himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," and "perfects holiness in the fear of the Lord." Influenced by the sublime motive of love to God, and strengthened with all might by the Divine Spirit in the inner

man, he triumphs over the world and its allurements, and enjoys a celestial purity and peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

Doubtless, there are many who make a vain profession of the Gospel. Actuated by a transient sympathy, a momentary impulse; driven by fear, or attracted by visionary hopes, they become ostensibly members of the Church of Jesus Christ, yet remain forever ignorant of the "power of godliness," and strangers to the "faith that overcometh the world." Like the flying fish that springs from the briny wave, with glittering scales, to sparkle for a moment in the solar rays and sink again from view into its original and proper element, so do these heartless professors, for a brief period, appear in the sunlight of the Gospel, only to return immediately to their natural and appropriate place—the world.

But the course of the true believer is like that of the passenger bird which sets forth to seek a more congenial clime. It pauses not upon its journey, except to gather the simple

food which is necessary to subsistence. It stops not to spend the precious hours in bowers of love, but speeds its lofty flight, with wing unwearied, until it has reached the peaceful regions where it can find secure repose.

The Christian religion, in short, proposes nothing less than an entire transformation of the human character. This must be accomplished, or there can be no well-grounded hope of future bliss. It is not by the establishment of mere formal or ceremonial relations with the Deity, or with the Christian Church, that this is to be attained. True relations, indeed, exist only as effects or consequences of a change of heart. And these are not mere abstract relations, but true *relationships*.

Among men we have often true relationships where we have no family resemblance, as where children are unlike their parents. But, in the spiritual world, *we can have no true relationship without likeness*. The pure in heart are related to each other because they are alike, and they are related to God and will be admitted to his presence because they resemble him. It is not

the space between heaven and hell that separates the righteous from the wicked, but their contrariety of character and their alienation of soul.

How true it is, then, that only by a conformity to the divine character men can become partakers of the salvation of God! How evident it is that only by a renovation of heart men can be prepared for heaven! He who seeks a foreign land will wisely learn its laws and language, and provide himself with its current coin, and secure to himself friends who will receive him there. How sedulously should the Christian, then, labor to render himself thus familiar with heaven, and thus to furnish himself with such sterling attributes of character as are stamped with the image and superscription of Christ! How earnestly he should seek, by fellowship with God here and by keeping his commandments in faith and hope and love, to provide for himself friends who will receive him into the eternal mansions!

XXII.

"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth."—PSALM xcvi: 8, 9.

HOW precious are the hours appropriated to the worship of the Most High! How soothing to the wounded spirit the sacred offices of religion! In the assembly of the saints a heavenly peace diffuses itself over the soul. Amidst the solemn invocations of earnest prayer the world and all its vanities disappear. Its corroding cares, anxieties, and fears are banished from the heart, and replaced by freedom, joy, and blessed hopes. The swelling anthem of divine praise bears, upon wings of melody, into the deepest recesses of our nature the transporting truths of revelation, awakens the dearest mem-

ories of the past, or marshals in bright array the crowding visions of the future. What thronging images cluster around the welling fountains of thought and feeling! How enrapturing these spiritual delights which are the pre-libations of future blessedness! How sweetly the responsive fervors of gratitude and love commingle with the pensive meditations of penitence or remorse! How clearly now are the secrets of the heart revealed before the bar of conscience! How swiftly doth busy memory recall, in all its moral relations, the history of the past!

Where now are those once dearly loved, with whom we held sweet converse and communion—the friends of our youth, now perhaps alienated or long forgotten? The tokens of affection unrequited, the consciousness of duties unfulfilled, the remembrance of the dear ones who rest in the cold and silent grave, and to whom we may speak no word of regret and offer no evidence of unchanged regard, are all strangely interwoven with the deep joyfulness of the present and with the glad assurances of an eternal reunion in the realms of glory. We see them

again in the visions of memory. We hear again their voices re-echoing in our hearts. We receive again their glances of confidence and love. But, ah! we long in vain to clasp the fleeting shades, and to confess how far we failed to reciprocate their tenderness or appreciate their solicitude and loving care. Amidst the tumult of our feelings, how sweet those tears which flow unbidden, yet, ah! how unavailingly, save as they serve to reveal us to ourselves, to chasten our affections and assure our hopes! How delightful are those moments, rich in blessing, when the soul dissolves, as it were, in a grief that is full of joy, in the consciousness it gives of the immortal nature and unmeasured depths and capacities of our moral and spiritual being!

But, alas! for that apostate memory, that nature lost to love and truth, that here, in presence of these sacred memorials of a love which, as the sunlight hides the stars, obscures, by its superior glory, all mere human affections, may experience no remorse and realize no blessedness! These consecrated emblems speak to us of Him who hath washed us from our

sins in his own blood—of Him who, while we were yet enemies, hath given himself for us that he might redeem us from death and ransom us from the power of the grave. Alas! for the insensibility of this poor sin-stricken heart, for that paralysis of the inner nature which enfeebles and benumbs our spiritual powers! How often, alas! since that divine love was assured to us in the blest time of our espousals, have we failed to fulfill our vows of faithfulness! How often have we forgotten the enduring constancy, and unswerving truth, and boundless love of our adorable Redeemer! How often have we become negligent of his instructions! How often have we rebelled against his authority! How often been ungrateful for his benefits!

And now he is presented here to us wounded to death in our behalf. That disfigured visage, that bleeding form so "marred more than the sons of men," those pierced hands which he had stretched forth only to bless, those beautiful but now lacerated feet which had borne him on his heavenly mission of love—here present themselves to the eye of Faith,

and we seem to witness that now lifeless body, enshrouded in the habiliments of death and laid in the dark and silent tomb. Alas! shall those ears, once ever open to the cry of the suffering and the penitent, never more receive our words of sorrow and contrition? Shall those loving eyes never more welcome our return? Shall those divine lips never more greet us with the assurance: "Thy sins are forgiven thee?" Shall we never more renew the blessed fellowship of the past? Alas! how vain are tears of grief, or words of penitence, or promises of amendment, when the grave has hidden from our eyes the neglected or the injured! How fruitless now are self-reproaches! How futile now the hope of renewing the sweet intimacies of friendship or of love!

But, oh! what startling revelation meets us here! "Now hath Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." Shall we then, indeed, once more be permitted to behold him? Shall we again listen to his voice? Shall we again receive his favor and enjoy his presence? Assuredly not, if, with the eager haste of

carnal doubt that trusts alone to sensuous proofs, we rush, like Peter or John, to gaze into the tomb of the crucified Redeemer. We shall perceive there naught but the cerements of the dead, and shall return unblessed and unrewarded. Oh! it is in these solemn moments, when the seen seems to blend itself with the unseen, when Time merges into Eternity and Death resolves itself into Life, that the heart commands a solemn and a sacred pause. It is in this hour that we may stand, in the stillness of trustful hope and in the conscious helplessness of our feeble nature, to see the salvation of God. The spiritual perception of the soul requires the faith of the affections, the loving confidence of the heart, and it is with Mary we must remain in patient waiting for Jesus, if we would indeed receive the joyful assurance of an angelic vision, or be permitted to see once more in reality the risen Lord. Near as he was to Peter and to John they saw, they heard him not; they trusted to their own perceptions; they relied upon their own understandings. Oh! that we may judge not by feeble sense, but in faith and love await our Savior! It is here he shall then meet with us to

inquire: "Why weepest thou?" "Whom seekest thou?" It is here we may again enjoy our blissful communion as of old, and hear his guiding words of truth, and renew our vows of fealty. And it is here we shall be permitted to rejoice in the blessed assurance that, at the appointed time in the bright regions of eternal glory, we shall rejoin the loved and lost, where all sorrow shall be forgotten, all tears be wiped away, all faithful love and fellowship be restored, and where, amidst fullness of joy and spiritual blessedness, "we shall be forever with the Lord."

XXIII.

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

"But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Cor. xv: 56, 57.

HOW terrible is that malady which death alone can cure! How irremediable that distemper whose termination can be found only in the destruction of the sufferer? How mortal that evil from which there is a refuge only in the grave! How sad that condition where all human appliances are vain, where Life may linger without Hope, and consciousness remain only to perpetuate despair! Yet such a malady as this is sin, inherent in that carnal nature, that depraved moral and physical constitution, that "body of death," in which man is now condemned to fulfill those years of penal servi-

tude which precede the hour of his inevitable doom. "For sin has entered into the world and death by sin, and death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The penalty of "capital punishment" has been announced against all by an infallible Judge whose sentence is irrevocable. Already, indeed, in its highest sense, has that dread sentence been fulfilled when man is left alienated and separated from God and debarred from those fountains of joy—that spiritual communion which alone can truly constitute the life and blessedness of the soul.

What varied means, what strenuous efforts have men employed throughout the ages, in the vain hope of discovering for sin, or for its effects, an appropriate and efficient remedy. Philosophy has sought to lull the sufferer into a repose more cruel than wakefulness and vexed with horrid dreams. It has endeavored to benumb all sense, to steep the soul in forgetfulness, or soothe its fretful anguish by the fictions of the imagination. It would impugn the evidence of consciousness in asserting that "pain is not an evil," or in mockery tantalize the wretched

victim burdened with the ills of mortality, in declaring that "pleasure is the only good." It would seek to convert the objects of sense into mere appearances, and ideas into reminiscences of the real and eternal patterns familiar to the soul in an ante-natal state of being, as emanations of that divine idea which alone exists. It has traversed the wide regions of speculative thought, but to end its fruitless search for truth and life in darkness and in doubt. A dying Socrates orders a vain oblation to an Esculapius incompetent to afford relief or rescue. The greatest of modern philosophers* announces that "the highest reach of human science is the scientific recognition of human ignorance." There is here no real power to enlighten, no hope to cheer the desponding, no salvation for the lost. The mysteries of sin are here left unexplored, the secrets of death unrevealed, the light of life undiscovered.

Again have men supposed that in ritualistic observances, in outward forms, in the fulfillment

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*Sir William Hamilton.

of the ordinances and commandments of law, they would be able to attain to righteousness and peace. But, alas! how unavailing is delight in even the divine law, when opposed to that imperious "law in the members" which ever wars against the "law of the mind," and takes occasion by the commandment itself, which is holy, just, and good, to bring the soul into condemnation and captivity! How feeble, before the overmastering supremacy of the carnal nature, is the human will! How fatally that commandment, which was ordained to life, becomes transformed into a ministration of death! How sin, by its very means, achieves its greatest victory, and how futile is that mortal struggle when law itself imparts life, and strength, and malignity to sin, and, far from aiding in the conflict of the soul, serves but to aggrandize guilt and inflict the dread penalties of its own violation!

And yet, again, how vain have been the efforts of mankind to obtain deliverance through the sin-offerings whose blood has bedewed their altars! How essentially vain the knowledge that death alone could even typically save the sinner,

since in the blood of the victim there was no meritorious efficacy, no power to purge the conscience, no life to energize the soul! What hecatombs have been vainly offered amidst the rites of heathen and of Jewish worship! How unavailing have been all the penances of superstition, the oblations of idolatry, the self-immolations of fanaticism! Through what weary hours of darkness have men sought to find their way—groping after God if haply they might find him—and how fruitless has been their search for truth, for righteousness and life!

Yet, ah! how near to all has ever been the Divine presence, and how long in patient love has the Almighty borne with man's apostasy and vain devices! How gloriously has he at length himself achieved deliverance and salvation through that righteousness which is "by faith of Christ unto all and upon all them that believe!" How freely is man justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus, whom God himself has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins! Apart from

all the avails of human wisdom, and independent of all deeds of law, Christ has appeared in the closing age of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Made of a woman, made under the law, he has expiated in our human nature, through the infinite purity and dignity of his own, the accumulated sin of the world. How truly, in that Holy One who was in the likeness of sinful flesh, in that Divine Sin-Offering, has sin in the flesh received its condemnation! How fully has the just and holy law of God been vindicated and magnified! How wondrously has infinite justice been reconciled with mercy in this unspeakable gift of God!

How sweet, in this hour, the reflection that the work of Christ is perfect! Death hath taken sin away from all who have died with Christ! With him the sinful nature is crucified that the body of sin might be destroyed; and, since he that is dead is freed from sin, sin may no more have the dominion. But it was not the mission of Jesus merely to overcome the Powers of evil, and secure for us an escape from guilt and pun-

ishment. It was not merely to fulfill the requirements of the divine law and give freedom to the condemned, but to impart also light to the benighted, rest to the weary, strength to the feeble, and life to the dead. If, through him, we are dead to sin, it is that we may be alive to God. If we have been crucified with Christ, and through faith planted in the likeness of his death, it is that we should be also in the likeness of his resurrection. As in that loud shout of victory which he uttered upon the cross, he announced his triumph over the malign principalities of the unseen world, and, in that final moment, stripped off from himself those hostile spiritual foes who had ever sought in vain to seduce the human nature which he bore, so may the believer, through the death of Jesus, ever repel the Powers of darkness and overcome the temptations of the world. For in that death was destroyed him that had the power of death, and from the grave has Jesus brought again that human nature of which he is with us a partaker, and over which death can have no more dominion. As, then, in that he died, he died

to sin once, but, in that he liveth, he liveth unto God, so may the Christian ever realize that he is "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord."

XXIV.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."—PSALM xxiii: 1–4.

MULTITUDES of men have died, but only one Christ. All others died *by* sin, but he alone *for* sin. How wondrous is the nature of this death! How deep its significance! How vast its results! How far beyond the human faculties to invent a scheme of redemption of whose grandeur, even when revealed, man is unable adequately to conceive!

"Christ died for our sins according to the

Scriptures." "He laid down his life for us." "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree." What transcendant facts are these! How full of meaning! How full of mystery! How full of the hope of deliverance! Is sin, indeed, put away? Is there pardon for the guilty and life for the dead? Has a substitute been found for the condemned to endure the penalty in his stead? Have the guilty been, indeed, thereby set free from the consequences of transgression? If so, then why these fears, these pains, these sorrows of earth, these wars and fightings, these crimes and desolations? Why these funereal rites, these mourning urns, these monuments of death? Have the divine purposes been frustrated? Has Jesus shed his blood and given himself for the life of the world in vain? Ah! no; but man, untaught of God, ever conceives amiss of spiritual things, and occupies himself with the visible and the temporal rather than with the unseen and the eternal. Unconscious of his true condition, he comprehends not the deliverance which the Gospel brings, and, since it proffers not exemption from bodily suffering

or from natural death, he regards it with indifference or rejects it with disdain.

How incorrect a conception, alas, it would be of the work of Christ, were we to suppose that he came merely to prevent the enforcement of the penalties of sin by enduring these for us! How narrow a view of the efficacy of the Sin-Offering upon Calvary, to imagine it merely a species of commercial substitution, an equivalent exchange, or the ground of mere juridical acquittal! Truly, the death of Christ of itself prevented the infliction of no penalty, compromised none of the eternal principles of justice, frustrated the fulfillment of no divine decrees. The world of the ungodly has still remained alienated from God by wicked works and "dead in trespasses and in sins." Over all of Adam's race death has still reigned, alike over infant and adult, saint and sinner. Far nobler, higher, better purposes were involved in the death of Jesus than the mere removal of the penalties of man's transgression. He came "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He came "to destroy the works of the devil," to introduce a

mighty era in the affairs of the spiritual and temporal universe, before which he was set forth as a propitiation to declare God's righteousness, that he might be just and yet the justifier of him that believes. This wondrous death affects not only the consequences of sin, but sin itself. It relates not merely to Adam's fallen race, but reaches in its vast results to the unseen world, to the throne of the Eternal, to the moral and physical destinies of the universe. Through it, is to be destroyed that mighty spiritual foe who has the power of death, and who, with all his rebel hosts, shall be consigned to everlasting fire. Through it, even the heavens and the earth shall be remodeled, and nature itself readjusted to new conditions of glory and of beauty.

Meanwhile, is it not true that Jesus "hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light?" Has not the Gospel been preached to the *dead?* Have not they that were dead heard the voice of the Son of God and *lived?* Most assuredly has it been the work of Christ to deliver souls from death in this, its highest and truest sense—a death in trespasses

and sins—a state of separation of the soul from the favor and fellowship of God. This separation he endured on our account—a separation which probably took place from the moment in which he was "delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," and the near approach of which wrung from him the bloody sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the plaintive appeal: "O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" as well as that pathetic exclamation upon the cross: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" This was that veritable and awful death of which alone the patient sufferer complained, and of which all other deaths may be considered but as symbolic or consequential—a death which had rested upon the whole human race since Adam by transgression fell, who, in the very day in which he sinned, was severed from the Divine communion which he had enjoyed in Eden. Hence, the sacrifice of Christ could neither anticipate nor prevent the execution of this dread penalty which was already enforced. Deliverance from its power alone was possible, and this

alone to those made conscious of their condition and willing to be freed. Thus, though the Gospel be preached to the *dead*, it is only those who HEAR that shall live. For "faith cometh by hearing," and "God gave his only-begotten Son that *whosoever believeth in him* might not perish, but have everlasting life." The impartation of life here could not follow as a *necessary* consequence of Christ's assumption of humanity and his sacrifice for sin. A death that rests upon moral and spiritual causes can be replaced only by a life which equally springs from a moral and spiritual source; and where will may choose and responsibility exist, there only may such a death be suffered or such a life be given. It is the individual, who through faith has become dead to sin, that is made alive to God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. On the other hand, it is he that "believeth not the Son" who "shall not see life," and upon whom the wrath of God shall continue to abide. How terrible that hopeless death which broods over the souls of the ungodly, and culminates in "an everlasting destruction from the pres

ence of the Lord and from the glory of his power!"

But there is a death which Jesus died for man, of a different nature and followed by different results, so far as it relates to humanity in general, viz.: *the separation of the body from the soul.* This death was one of the consequences of man's separation from the Divine presence in Eden, when he was cut off from the tree of life, and his bodily frame was left to exhaust its unrenewed energies through lapse of years, and to return finally to the dust from which it had been taken. It is, then, to the frailty and perishableness of the body alone that this death is due. The soul itself knows no decay, and neither needs nor desires to be unclothed. It is not the soul which abandons the body, but it is the tottering frame which, with enfeebled vitality and worn-out tissues, sinks into ruin and forsakes the soul. In the order justly indicated by the sacred penman, it is this mortal tabernacle which, by a necessity that is inevitable, is resolved into its elements, while the freed spirit returns, unchanged, to God who gave it. This death, too,

Jesus could have experienced when his human life and human nature should have fulfilled the common destiny of humanity. But it was not permitted to be so. "His life was taken from the earth." In the full vigor of manhood, and with all the years of maturity unspent, and all the latent energies of man's corporeal being yet unwasted, he gave this life for us, and by cruel hands was crucified and slain. He endured this separation of soul and body by violence, as the Divine Victim, "the Lamb of God" who should "take away the sin of the world." It is this wondrous sacrifice which here, with appropriate material elements, we now commemorate. This bread is his body broken for us. This wine is his blood shed for us. As material beings we may learn, through material images alone, the deeper spiritual lessons of the world unseen, and these emblems, in imperfectly shadowing forth the crucifixion of Jesus, show forth a death, which, however terrible, was itself but expressive or adumbrative of that more awful separation of the soul from God, and those inexpressible and mysterious sufferings which he endured on our

account. Nevertheless, as this bread and wine represent to us the body and blood of Christ, and in our hearts we should here behold him openly set forth crucified before us, so does the crucifixion of Jesus embody in itself to the world, the entire sacrifice, the entire visible manifestation of the Divine Sin-Offering. It is in this, then, that to us every thing is included; and, however justly the mind may frame distinctions or partially penetrate into the unspeakable mysteries of the death of Jesus, it is Christ and him crucified that alone should occupy our hearts and consecrate our lives. It was in his own body on the tree that he bore our sins. It was through the stripes inflicted upon him that we have been healed. It was upon the cross that he was made "a curse for us," and suffered in all their forms, however mysterious and manifold, the penalties of our transgressions.

Christ having, by thus "offering himself once for all," opened up a new and living way of access to God, it is the individual who accepts the Divine mercy, and, abandoning sin, returns to God, that is released from that penalty of

spiritual death which rests upon the world. He was previously alive to sin and dead to God; but is now dead to sin and "alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord," and can experience no more that death from which he has been freed. In this sense it is that "he that believeth can never die," that "he shall not taste death," that "he shall not see death." The Divine favor and fellowship shall be no more withdrawn, for the life of the believer is hid with Christ in God, and there can be no more separation for those who have "put on Christ," who walk in him, who live by faith in the Son of God, and are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise—the earnest of an eternal inheritance. But the Christian, like others, must still experience the separation of the body from the soul. From this the death of Christ has not released him, for this penalty is demanded in accordance with the inflexible decree of God, and the unchanging purpose of him who has higher things in store for man than that he should dwell forever in the flesh. Hence, "it is appointed to all men once to die;" but, oh, wondrous revelation!

since Jesus truly partook of our nature, uniting it with the divine; since he endured this bodily death also on our account, and, having power to lay down thus his life and power to take it again, has accordingly renewed again the connection of body and soul, resuming that crucified form in which he suffered, so is it equally the divine appointment that all who thus in Adam die shall be made alive in Christ, and that this separation of body and soul shall also be terminated by a reunion.

There is this difference, however, that, as the death of the body is not moral or spiritual, but *natural* and in harmony with the inflexible laws of the material system, not depending on choice or human will or purpose, but necessarily affecting the entire race without exception, so the reunion effected in the resurrection of Jesus necessarily relates to all, and results in the resurrection of all, not depending on human choice or will or any moral reason, but taking place in virtue of the same inflexible divine purposes and arrrangements, which for sin had consigned all men to the grave. As the first fruits give token

that all succeeding plants of similar nature shall, in like manner, attain to fruitage and produce the ripe corn in the ear, so the resurrection of Christ as "the first fruits of them that slept," gives evidence that the resurrection of the body is the final ordination of God, and that as Jesus is the "plague of death," so will he be also the "destruction of the grave." Hence, while in addressing the Jews in reference to that death to God which rested upon men, he said: "The hour is coming, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live," he presently added, in relation to the death of the body: "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which they that are *in their graves* shall hear his voice and shall come forth—they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

How perfect, then, in power, how complete in fullness is the work of Christ! How far-reaching the consequences of his death, and how glorious the salvation he accomplishes by his life! How precious the assurances of his mercy, faithfulness,

and truth! How blessed the hope of his return! How fully has he now taken away the sting of death, and how sweetly he "gives to his beloved sleep," during those peaceful hours which usher in for them the bright morning of an eternal day.

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